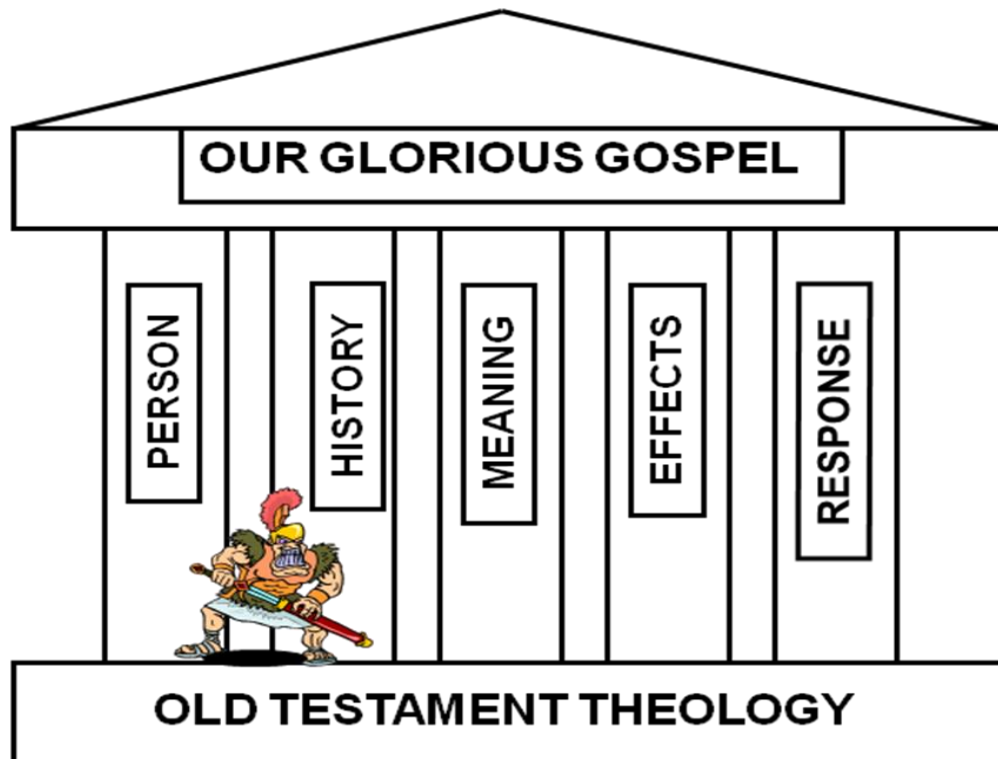


## **Five Pillars of the Gladiator Gospel**

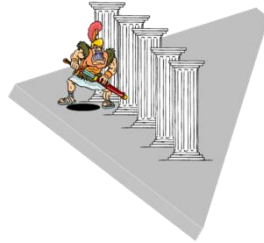
### **NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY COURSE**



**B r o o k y R S t o c k t o n**

# **Five Pillars of the Gospel**

**Version 3.0**



## **NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY**

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# **PREFACE**

It has been said *men perform according to their theology whether it is right or wrong*. If this be the case, what could possibly be more important than the study of theology? Read truth, think accurately; think accurately, live accurately. Shalom.

Enclosed are my study notes for New Testament Theology for Seminary Classes. They represent a good portion of my life thought and work. However, because these lectures were given at different times to different audiences, and were written at various times on four or five computer programs, in different styles, and formats, the reader may notice many inconsistencies. Consider this rough lecture / sermon notes.

Having noted the flaws of these lecture notes, the student will find the subject of NT Theology absolutely delightful. This is not a complete work on the gospel, but it represents a lifetime of meditation in the gospel.

This information is a Resource for the student of history, for the student of Biblical languages, for the preacher looking for sermon material, and for the theologian looking for truth. In today's culture where many are seeking religious, subjective experiences to move them along in their spiritual pilgrimage, the thinking student can arise above all the calf slobber in the pew and sink his teeth into the *hors d'oeuvres* of kingdom truth that God has prepared for those who love him. The challenge of studying this work lies with the learner: Most theology students have *no life experience on the basis of which to entertain serious theological questions*. Furthermore, we live in *casual, sloppy, relativistic age* where many churches have little to no concern about thinking accurately. This being the case, hopefully a few truth-seekers will appreciate this work.

The theme of this work is the **Five Pillars of the Gladiator Gospel**. It is my contention that the gospel is the main message of the New Testament, and that *the believer should major on the majors and minor on the minors*. Furthermore, Christianity is the most powerful when the gospel is understood by the preacher and articulated accurately to a hungry audience. *If there is a cloud in the pulpit, there will be a fog in the pew*. This work is for the gladiator Christian; that is, for those students who intend on entering the Coliseum of ideas to hack and slice their way through misconceptions, lies, and false doctrines arising from the cults, social liberals, atheists, New Agers, the psychologizers, and the philosophers who battle for the minds of men.

My prayer is that each student will become a gladiator for Christ with a powerful appreciation of Jesus' gladiator gospel. My hope is that each will build his or her ministry on the Five Pillars Gospel and be able to pick from the condiments in God's banquet of delights to feed hungry souls.

Brooky Stockton, Ph.d.



# **DEDICATION**

I am forever grateful to Bill and Jo Ann Taylor of Colorado Springs who challenged me to search out the NT *kerygma*, to define the gospel, and to decipher the meaning of the kingdom of God. Their challenges helped me to “major on the majors and minor on the minors.” Consequently, the gospel is the backbone of my theology and ministry. May God bless the Taylors for their dedication to the gospel of Christ; and,

I am indebted to Jim Wright of Colorado Springs who’s Bible studies ignited a flame in my heart for the study of Scripture; and for Marion Michaux who constantly challenged my presumptions faith and who taught me that if “we are not fishing, we are not following”; and,

I am indebted to Dr. George Eldon Ladd whose studies on the kingdom of God are second to none. His thought processes are notable in this work. His scholarship and kindness to those who disagreed with him are a model for every Bible student; and,

I am indebted to Trinity Southwest University and Dr. Steve Collins who’s work as a scholar and who’s gracious spirit and lack of censoriousness to Trinity students produced an atmosphere where real learning could develop; and,

I am indebted to Verdict Magazine because its authors introduced me to Reformed theology and how to use the lens of justification to think through a steady currency of ideas circulating in Christian circles.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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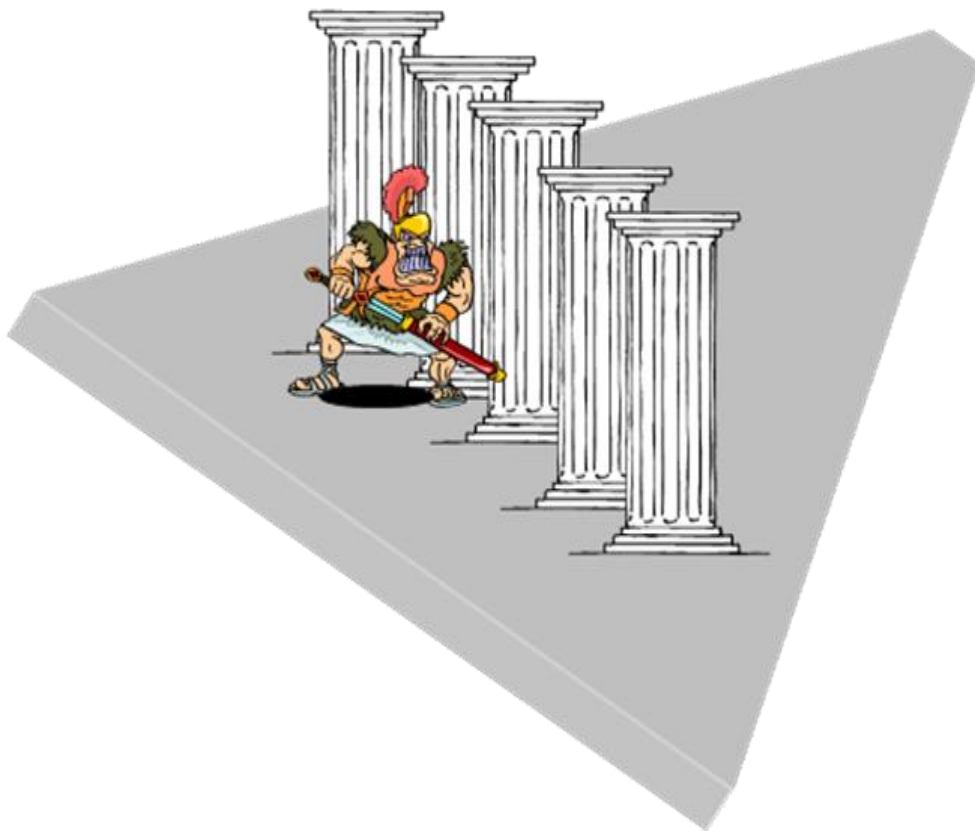
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# **INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL**



# 1. THE GOSPEL AND THE NT KERYGMA

***Acts 17:6 These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also***

The term “*kerygma*” is a Greek word that refers to the content of apostolic preaching.

The early apostles rocked the Roman world proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God validated by the risen Christ. Within 25 years after the death of Christ, the New Testament (NT) *kerygma* (proclamation) augured its way into human hearts changing lives, transforming men, and challenging the precepts of philosophy, morals, religion, and government. The very purposes of Christ were powerfully executed, “ye shall be witnesses (legally) unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8). The Book of Acts is a courtroom drama where the apostles bore witness under penalties of perjury to the jury of the Roman world about the literal death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Within 300 years, the ghastly, violent Coliseum contests where young gladiators hacked and sliced their way to fame were eliminated from Roman life. Being pummeled into submission by the gentle persuasion of God’s gladiator gospel, the death arenas were finally closed down around 400 A.D. due to the courage of Telemachus the monk.

Christianity accomplished what no other religion has ever accomplished. Despite the language, religious, philosophical, and cultural barriers, the NT preachers battled a war of words winning hearts and creating enemies. Assemblies of Christians surfaced in every major city in the Roman Empire. Since the NT era, Christianity has challenged men and nations, cultures and civilizations, and the simple and the sophisticated with their powerful message regarding a risen Christ.

How did they do they do it? What was there secret? Can it be done again?

I do not know about you, but I want like to see a little reproduction of that New Testament explosion that shook the first century. What are the factors? Can we imitate them?

## KINGDOM FACTORS

***Acts 17:3, 6 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ . . . Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.***

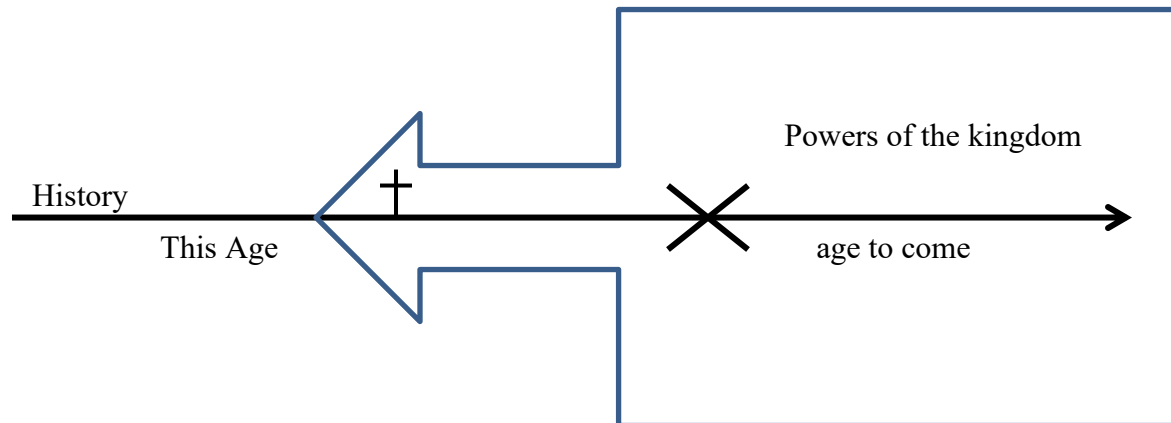
John the Baptist preached “*The kingdom of Heaven is at hand*” (Matthew 3:1ff). When Christ began His ministry He said, “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand*” (Mark 1:15). The long predicted kingdom in the OT arrived in history in and through the ministry of Christ. The rule of God was present in Jesus ministry defeating man’s enemies: Satan, sin, and death. Triumphant over death, Christ was installed at the right hand of God reigning over the affairs of mankind from His highly exalted position (Acts 2:36).

This kingdom gospel stunned the Jewish world . . . and it turned the Roman world upside down. When this kingdom gospel came to Thessalonica, unbelieving Jews stirred up some ruffians and brought charges against Paul noting that “These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.” They accused Paul of promoting “*another king, Jesus!*” and doing “*contrary to the laws of Caesar*” (Acts 17:6,

## INTRODUCTION

7). The Messianic era arrived in history without consummation challenging man's authority and bringing men under the blessings of the age to come. Thus, the gospel of the kingdom is the Gladiator Gospel that turned the world upside down . . . and as we understand it and proclaim it, it will continue to conquer hearts and nations.

**Figure 1: Arrival of the kingdom**



## HARVEST FACTORS

*1 Thessalonians 1:8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything.*

What power! What fruit! What an explosion of testimony for Christ! What pastor would not want to have this kind of effect in his preaching? How did Paul do it? What are the factors for this kind of fruit?

Paul laid out the factors involved in the transformation of the Thessalonians that enabled them to become a model to all the believers (1:7) in such a powerful way that the Gladiator Gospel blasted its way into the market places everywhere (1:8). When the unbelievers heard Paul, they “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.” How can we account for such dynamic fruit? Look at 1 Thessalonians one and note the factors.

- **His message:** Paul's kerygma,<sup>1</sup> his Gladiator Gospel, was the powerful seed sown in the minds and hearts of the Thessalonians (1:5).
- **His power:** Paul's gospel proclamation was watered and nurtured by the Holy Spirit (1:5).
- **His character:** Paul's godly, attentive pastoral spirit acted not only as a model, but a champion Gardner seeking gospel fruit. (1:6).

The faith in the heart of the Thessalonians was the good soil where the gospel seed was planted (1:3).

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<sup>1</sup> The word *kerygma* is a Greek word that means *proclamation*. It refers to the content of Paul's message.

## INTRODUCTION

Do we want to have as effective ministry as Paul? Of course we do! Somehow, someway, if we can tap into these factors, we can see dynamic fruit like Paul saw at Thessalonica.

### Figure 2: Harvest Factors

Faith

A man of God + the Gospel + the Holy Spirit = Fruits Love

Hope

### FAITH FACTORS

The question is this: Of the factors mentions in this chapter, what is reproducible? That is, what factors can we control and seek to emulate? We cannot control the Holy Spirit nor can we make men respond in faith as did the Thessalonians. That leaves two factors that we can control: (a) we can sow good seed by perfecting our understanding of the NT Kerygma of Jesus Christ in such a way as to plant it correctly in the heart-soil of men; and, (b) we can discipline and train ourselves to be godly models, patient farmers spreading the good news of Christ.

In my opinion, Christians err by trying to reproduce the spiritual gifts active in the first century. Pounding drums, doing rain dances, and shouting war whoops is not the way to produce the latter rains of the Holy Spirit upon our ministry. Do not hear what I am not saying. I am not saying a man should not seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit and yielded to his purposes. I am saying the Spirit is sovereign and will not be controlled by anyone. Controlling the Spirit is like trying to capture dandelions seeds on windy day. The best we can do is to yield to the Spirit and let him direct our paths. Fruit will come, not because we will it, but because He ordains it!! Election is of God, not man (1:4). God is sovereign. The best we can do is study and prepare and yield and wait on God to move.

What we can do is the following:

**We can and must major on understanding the NT kerygma.** We live in an age of “isms;” secularism, humanism, socialism, atheism, multiculturalism, egoism, empiricism, individualism, etc. All are trying to capture hearts and minds and gain adherents. Predators abound. And, on the trading floor of “isms” and gods, the Christian is under command to hail the truth. But, the average Christian cannot communicate the faith in such a way as to win men. He cannot debate and cause false ideologies to crumble at his feet because he may not truly understand the NT kerygma. If we want to see a harvest of healthy souls for Christ we must know Paul’s gospel—inside and out!! We must be able to articulate the NT Kerygma in such a way that is smashes strongholds (1 Corinthians 10:4) and excites faith. Knowledge of God’s Gladiator Gospel can help a person be victorious in the battle for the minds of men.

**Secondly, this means we can and must major on living godly lives.** The Gladiator Gospel must be in the hands of Gladiator Christians whose lives match the message. It was Paul’s dynamic life as well as his Gladiator Message that won the hearts of the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 2:1-14) Paul was a faithful *steward* of the faith; and,

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- Paul was a *hardened soldier*—God’s gladiator who entered the Coliseum in a contest between Roman gods. There he hacked and sliced his way through false Jewish traditions and Roman philosophies in the first century to win the hearts and souls of men; and,
- Paul treated the Thessalonians gently as a *nursing mother*; and,
- Paul was strong acting wisely as a *caring father*.

If we will imitate Paul’s life, Paul’s message, and yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, surely we will bear fruit in the harvest! “*The harvest is plentiful*” Jesus declare, but “competent, knowledgeable, godly, articulate *laborers are few!*” (Luke 10:2).

The purpose of this manual is to help the student understand the NT Kerygma so that he can powerfully *articulate it in three minutes or three years*.

## 2. THE NT KERYGMA

Now that we understand that the Spirit used Paul’s dynamic message and powerful life to produce fruit at Thessalonica, we can get on with the work of trying to identify the NT kerygma. If we are to be effective in serving Christ, we must master the NT kerygma.

**Q:** So, what is the NT kerygma? Christians scholars do not define it the same way.

**C. H. Dodd** saw the NT kerygma as the preaching of the age of fulfillment, the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Messianic Age, and an appeal to repent (C.H.Dodd, 1964).

**Bo Reicke** argued that the major thesis of the NT kerygma concerned Jesus as Servant of the Lord, his miracles, his death and resurrection, and appeal that all must turn to the Lord ( (Reicke, 1953)).

**M. Hunter** categorized the NT kerygma contained the fulfillment of prophecies, the presentation of the death, burial, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, and a summons to repent in order to receive forgiveness of sins (Hunter, 1944, 29-30).

**T.F. Glasson** proposed a kerygma as follows: the fulfillment of Scripture, the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, and the forgiveness of sins, and the Apostolic witness (Glasson, 1952, p. 129, 132).

**Rudolph Bultmann** acknowledge a NT Kerygma but argued that it was shrouded in the mythological worldview of the first century (Bultmann, 1953)<sup>2</sup>

As you can see, there is some common threads among these scholars as to what the apostles preached but there is not universal agreement about the NT Kerygma. But, whether we define fully or not, it was powerful enough to shake the foundation of the Roman world.

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<sup>2</sup> All of the historical beliefs can be found in Harry Poe’s book, The Gospel and Its Meaning. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966.

## **THE FOUNDATION OF THE KERYGMA**

To understand the message that turned the world upside down one has to grapple with the meaning of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God was the major message of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2ff), the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 4:17), Philip (Acts 8:12), Peter (2 Peter 1:11), and Paul (Acts 28:31).

Preachers use the term “*kingdom of God*” frequently in sermons, but very few sermons are dedicated to helping believers understand the concept. While books have been written on the subject, confusion abounds among believers as to what is the kingdom.

The kingdom of God that the disciples preached was **not just a phrase**, or a theory, or a realm, or a sphere, or a system of theology. It was not synonymous with heaven, though its origin is in heaven. It is not the church, though it is acknowledged and enjoyed among the church. The kingdom is not the Davidic kingdom, though Jesus was heir to the Davidic throne.

The English word “*kingdom*” comes from the Greek word “*basileia*” which means “rule” or “authority” or “dominion.” When the nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a “kingdom,” he did not receive subjects, for they already existed. He did not receive a territory for the geographic location of the people he ruled was already identified (Luke 19:12). He went into a far country to receive authority to rule; that is, the right to govern. **The kingdom of God, therefore, does not refer to subjects or to a realm, but to the rule of God.**

The Old Testament prophets saw a time when God’s reign would be manifest among men—a time when the governments of this world would be dissolved and the kingdom of God would be realized on earth. The central theme of this message is that the wicked will be punished and the righteous will enter the blessedness of Messianic Age of salvation (Isaiah 2:1-5; Ezekiel 38, 39; Zechariah 14; Malachi 4:1-3).

When John began preaching his message “*Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand*,” the Jewish people were expecting the *dynamic, irresistible, disruptive eschatological* kingdom to break into history to burn the chaff and to usher in the age of the regeneration, the age of the Spirit (Matthew 3:2ff).

However, Jesus did not inaugurate the eschatological judgment nor did He offer to the Jewish nation a Davidic throne. Rather, Jesus announced *the rule of God* at work among men. Preaching the kingdom alerted the Jewish nation that the eschatological rule of God had entered history in and through the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus was accused of casting out demons by Beelzebub, Jesus told a parable of a thief who entered a man’s house to steal his goods (Matthew 12:25-29).

The meaning of the parable is as follows:

- The house is the kingdom of darkness
- Jesus is the thief.
- Satan is the strong man, the lord of the mansion.
- Goods are people.

Since Jesus was delivering men from the bondage of disease, sin, and death, the rule of God was being manifest among men. The eschatological kingdom which brought release from sin and death had entered history before the consummation of history to deliver men from Satan’s power and to bring men under the



## INTRODUCTION

blessings of the Messianic Age. *The fruits of the age to come* became available to men in and through the ministry of Christ in advance of the political manifestation of the kingdom of God at the end of history. George Eldon Ladd put it this way:

*The kingdom of God is the dynamic invasion of the rule of God into human history through the redemptive reign of Christ, the purpose of which is to deliver men and women out from under the tyranny of Satan, sin, and death and to bring them under the blessings of God's reign. It involves two great moments: fulfillment within history, and consummation at the end of history (Ladd, 1974).*

The kingdom of God embraced the resurrection of the dead, and in Jesus' resurrection from the grave, the first fruits of the age to come burst into history giving men hope and assurance that death is not the end, that there is hope, and that Jesus Christ is Lord over Satan, sin, and death. It was this understanding that gripped the hearts and minds of the early apostles and sent them into the Roman market place announcing the good news that the kingdom of God was no longer a dream but a factual, historical, legal, spiritual reality that appeared in history.

## THE OLD TESTAMENT FOUNDATION

Every building has a foundation. Without a doubt, the NT Kerygma is built upon OT revelation; that is, OT theology—theology that is assumed and not reiterated in the NT in great detail.

The OT foundations of the NT Kerygma are as follows: **God** (Theology), **Man** (Anthropology), **sin** (Hamartiology), **Israel** (Israelology), the **Ten Commandments** (Torahology), **Messiah** (OT Christology), **salvation** (Soteriology), **covenants** (Covenantology) and **the kingdom of God** (Basileiaology). To disregard foundational subjects regarding God or His law or His government or His love of the elect would be a great disservice to His Revelation and to the gospel. These subjects would better suit a course in OT Theology . . . but, must be recognized as the foundation on which the NT Kerygma is built.

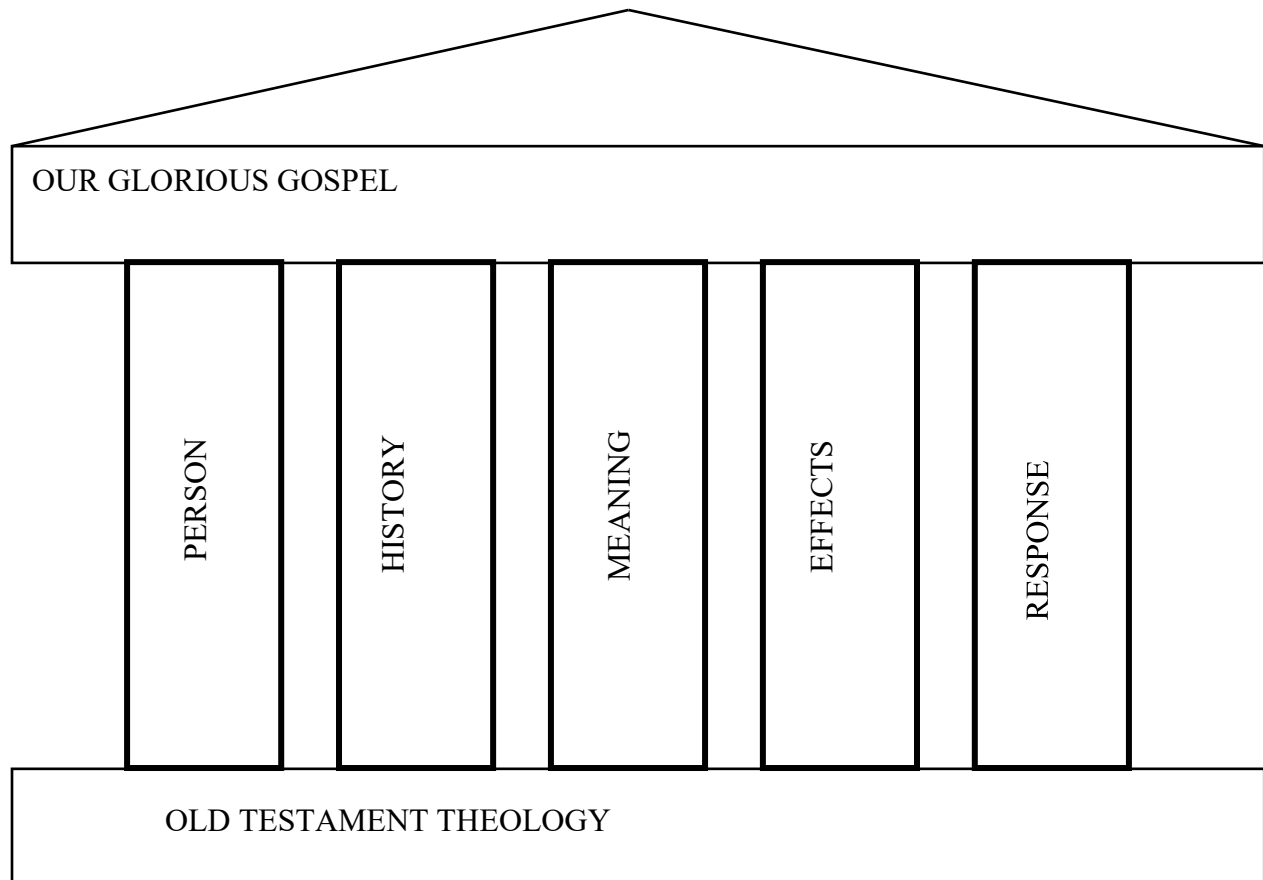
## A PROPOSAL FOR THE NT KERYGMA

With the kingdom of God as a foundation, I propose the NT kerygma is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which revolves around what I call the **Five Pillars of the Gladiator Gospel**—a Gospel built on the entrance of the kingdom of God into history in and through the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Pillar One:** The Person of Christ
- **Pillar Two:** The dynamic History of Christ: His birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, present exalted life, and *His coming glory* (the Not-Yet of eschatology).
- **Pillar Three:** The meaning of the History of Christ: redemption, propitiation, reconciliation, glorification, etc.
- **Pillar Four:** The Effects of His History on those who believe and repent: justification, eternal life, forgiveness, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and other spiritual blessings.
- **Pillar Five:** The Response required for justification, which is faith and repentance, and the response required for sanctification, which is obedience to all the applicable commands in the Word of God.

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All of these Pillars are found in the Book of Acts and in the epistles of the New Testament. But, knowing about them and knowing them well enough to utilize them to meet the specific needs of diverse audiences is another matter. If you will give yourself to understanding the Five Pillars of the gospel so that you can preach and teach them with accurateness and clarity, I believe you will see a harvest of men turning from idols to serve the living and true God. Men still struggle with sin, sickness, and death and the gospel is the only message of real hope in this world.



### 3. THE GOSPEL AND DISCIPLESHIP

Men perform according to their theology, whether it is right or wrong!

**2 Timothy 2:2** *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

**Basic Premise:** Our task is to pass on the gospel to the next generation unchanged, unmodified, and unaltered just like it was delivered to the Apostle Paul.

**Q:** What are "*the things*" that Paul had in mind when he penned the command to Timothy? "*The things*" can be identified as the following:

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"The good deposit" (1:14),

"The pattern of sound words" (1:13), and

"*The gospel*" (1:8-10). It is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ which we are to transfer to other men—nothing less, nothing more.

## CONFUSION ABOUT THE GOSPEL

There is no lack of confusion about the meaning of the Gospel. Below are some faulty and incomplete answers I have received in some of my theology classes:

The gospel is the Bible. (Correction: The Bible contains the gospel, but the Bible is not the gospel.)

The gospel is a style of music. (Correction: The gospel deserves to be sung, but a style of music is not the gospel.)

The gospel is how man must repent, and believe, and be baptized in the name of Christ. (Correction: the gospel is not what man must do for God, but what God has done for man.)

There are two gospels: the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of grace. (Correction: there is only one gospel.)

The gospel is about the death and resurrection of Christ. (Correction: This is partially true, but the gospel is more than an historical event -- it is an event that must be interpreted correctly, claimed, and applied.)

It behooves every generation to seek to understand the gospel; that is, to dust off the cobwebs, clean the closet of presumptions, and learn to manage the gospel correctly. Furthermore, we must distinguish between New Testament proclamation (*kerygma*) of the gospel and church teaching (*didache*) about the gospel. The two are not the same.

## WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

**Definition:** The gospel is the *good news* about **the person of Christ** (His unique person); His certain and **victorious history** His death (D), burial (B), resurrection (R), present risen life (PRL or PEL), and coming glory (CG), the **meaning of His history** (redemption), **the blessed effects** or benefits of His accomplishments (justification, the Holy Spirit and regeneration, eternal life, and forgiveness), and how to please God through repentance and faith (the basic response or decision).

**Fundamentals of the gospel:** It is good news that we know . . .

**Jesus is the Christ** (Mark 1:1): He is the promised Messiah propounded in Old Testament prophecy.

**Christ's glorious history is certain and true:** His death, burial, resurrection, present exalted life, were historical events. Death is man's fundamental dilemma and in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, Christ solved man's fundamental problem (1 Corinthians 15:1-12; Ephesians 1:19-21; 2 Thessalonians 2:1).

**Christ's history has meaning and provides wonderful benefits to the believer** (Colossians 1:26; Romans 5:1-10): Christ's death and resurrection have meaning (it is redemptive) and His history affects

## INTRODUCTION

the believer with spiritual riches: justification, forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, and the possession of eternal life.

**We know how to please God in this present evil age:** (Acts 20:21; 1 Timothy 1:8-11; Titus 2:11ff). It is good news that we know what pleases God. The kingdom offer requires decision. Repentance toward God and faith in Christ is the fundamental response God required to inherit the blessings of salvation.

## THE FIVE PILLARS OF THE GOSPEL

- The Person of Christ
- The History of Christ
- The Meaning of Christ's history
- The Effects of Christ's history on those who believe
- The Response God desires for those who hear the gospel and believe in His Son.

## RELATIONSHIP OF THE GOSPEL TO THE BIBLE

The Bible is not the gospel, but it contains the gospel; the Bible is true, but not all that is true is in the Bible<sup>3</sup>; all that is true is not gospel truth, but the gospel is the main truth God wants men to know and believe.

## KEY WORDS OF THE GOSPEL

There are three key words connected with the word "gospel" in the Greek language:

- **Evangelion:** It is used 78x in the New Testament as a noun and it means "good news."
- **Evangelizo:** It is used 55x as Greek verb, and it means "to bring good news."
- **Evangelistes:** It is used 33x as a noun, and it refers to a person, a "bringer of good news."

## THE BIG PICTURE OF THE GOSPEL

The "macro view gospel" is the message of the gospel in its completeness and fullness as opposed to a truncated or dwarfed view of the good news. **The gospel is the good news about the person of Christ, His history, the meaning of His history, and its effects on those who respond to Him in faith. To add or delete from this truth is to pervert the gospel** (Galatians 1:4-9).

### Figure 3: Gospel Chart

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<sup>3</sup> The Bible is the complete, sufficient Word of God and can be trusted on every subject on which it speaks!! But, the Bible is not a geography book or world history book or science book or a book on how to build boats. The world is full of books on subjects which the Bible does not address. Nothing, however, is as authoritative as the Bible on the subjects it addresses. It is the sure Word of God (Proverbs 30:5).

## INTRODUCTION

| OT      | PERSON     | HISTORY          | MEANING       | EFFECTS        | RESPONSE   |
|---------|------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|------------|
| God     | Christ     | Birth            | Incarnation   | Salvation      | Faith      |
| Man     | God/man    | Life             | Righteousness | Justification  | Repentance |
| Sin     | Son of God | Death            | Redemption    | Regeneration   | - - - - -  |
| Bible   | Messiah    |                  | Propitiation  | Holy Spirit    | Baptism    |
| Israel  |            | Burial           | Veritable     | Forgiveness    | Obedience  |
| Law     |            | Resurrection     | Triumph       | Reconciliation | Holiness   |
| kingdom |            | PRL <sup>4</sup> | Exaltation    | Eternal Life   | Love       |
|         |            | Coming Glory     | Consummation  | Glorification  | Giving     |
|         |            |                  |               | Church         |            |
|         |            |                  |               | Redemption     |            |
|         |            |                  |               | Adoption       |            |
|         |            |                  |               | Sanctification |            |
|         |            |                  |               | Identification |            |

Not all the meanings, effects, and responses of the Gospel are listed: Can you list others?

The lines under the response column separates the response (repentance and faith) necessary for justification (a forensic term meaning “to declared just.”), and the responses (obedience) necessary for sanctification (living justly).

### **WHAT IS THE SIMPLE GOSPEL?**

<sup>4</sup> PRL = Present Risen Life of Christ; i.e., His ministry now from the throne of God.

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The gospel, though it is deep and rich, should be proclaimed *simply and clearly* for those who have never heard it. Paul spent two whole years teaching the Gospel in Rome (Acts 28:31) . . . but, that same wonderful message can be simplified so a child can understand it.

***John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.***

**God:** *For God so loved the world . . .* The personal, infinite, triune God of the Bible loves you. The proof of his love is that he sent his Son to solve your major problem (true guilt before His bar of justice).

**Christ:** *That He gave His only begotten Son . . .* Jesus is the only declared Son. He is the Son of God, the Messiah, and God's appointed King. God gave his only Son for you because there was no other way for you to pay the debt you owe to God. Christ died for your sin as your substitute so you would not have to face the horrors of God's judgment.

**Faith:** *That whosoever believeth . . .* The "whosoever" is you. If you want God's love and forgiveness and life, you must personally respond to God and receive His gift of eternal life by faith. No one is born a Christian. Every man woman and child must hear and believe if they want to enter life.

**Judgment:** *Should not perish . . .* The penalty of sin is death. Without a Savior, the mallet of justice will fall on all sinners. Failure to respond will result in eternal death (hell). You can escape the darkness of God's judgment by accepting his remedy for your sin -- the death and resurrection of Christ.

**Salvation:** *Should have everlasting life . . .* When you receive Christ as your Savior, God grants to you the blessing of the age to come -- eternal life. To believe is to be saved and to possess eternal life. To have eternal life is to know God (John 17:1-3). To have life means you will share the life of the age to come, and that when you die, you will be ushered into the presence of your Heavenly Father.

## OTHER WAYS TO SYSTEMATIZE THE GOSPEL

Yes. Doctrine is often studied by the following classifications:

- Theology Proper                      The doctrine of God and His work
- Bibliology                              The doctrine of the Bible
- Israelology                            The doctrine of Israel
- Anthropology                        The doctrine of man
- Hamartiology                        The doctrine of sin
- Christology                            The doctrine of Jesus Christ
- Pneumatology                        The doctrine of the Holy Spirit
- Soteriology                            The doctrine of salvation
- Ecclesiology                          The doctrine of the church
- Angelology                            The doctrine of angels

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- Eschatology                      The doctrine of the last things
- Basileology                      The doctrine of the kingdom

This list represents a bonafide form of systematic theology . . . but it is not the way Paul transferred “the faith” to the churches; that is, he did not set up lectures and begin teaching systematic theology. He taught the Five Pillars of the Gladiator Gospel.

## RECOGNIZING ERRORS SURROUNDING THE GOSPEL

Two basic errors are often committed in regards to the gospel: One can err by *adding* to the gospel.

- Example: The Thessalonians were taught that Christ had already come and were distressed (2 Thessalonians 2:3). This error added to His history.
- Example: Those that teach that "healing" is a *guaranteed* benefit in this present age add to the gospel; those that teach any work other than a response of faith as a pre-requisite to salvation add to the gospel.

One can err by *denying* the gospel. This comes in many forms. Critics can deny anything: the deity of Christ (the cults), His history (Liberalism), His humanity (Gnostics), and eternal security (Armenians) to mention a few.

## MISTAKEN CONCEPTS AND THE GOSPEL

**To confuse the gospel with the Bible.** The Bible is not the gospel. We proclaim the message of the gospel from the Bible. While it is necessary to teach the Bible, the disciple must know the difference between *the Gospel of God* and *the Book of God*.

**To major on the minors instead of majoring on the majors.** Sometimes teachers become so wrapped up in the detail of Scripture that they fail to transfer the major concepts of the gospel to people. It is much like the hiker who can't see the forest for the trees. An inordinate amount of teaching on any subject can skew the gospel.

**To stress application before one has presented revelation.** Application is important, but we must learn not to stress commitment before a person has adequate time to perceive and ponder the wonderful blessings of the gospel.

**To neglect the development of a systematic understanding of the gospel.** Men perform according to their theology, whether it is right or wrong. Wrong beliefs are the roots of unbelief. If people are behaving incorrectly, it is quite possible they possess a midget-size view of the gospel.

The specific truths of the gospel are most needed where Satan is attacking the church and the culture; e.g., if Satan is attacking the authority of Scripture, it would be a fault to be focusing on the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's left toe; or, if Satan is attacking the family not to aim the big guns of the gospel at the enemy's argument.

*If I profess with loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly, I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there*

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*the loyalty for the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield beside, is merely flight and disgrace if he flinches at THAT point. (Martin Luther)*

### SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL AND DISCIPLESHIP

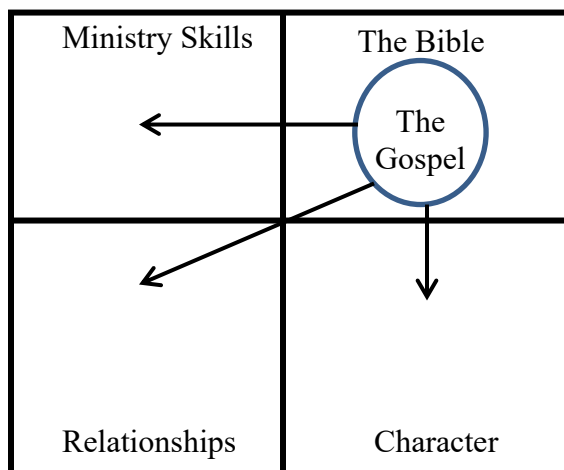
The Christian ministry is much like a 400 meter relay race. The contest is won or lost in the exchange of batons.

Likewise, the task of the pastor is to pass on the gospel intact to the next generation of stewards. If the gospel is warped, truncated, or deficient, then the heirs of the gospel will be impoverished and impotent in their task of gospel proclamation. The Christian ministry is about training people for service—"the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2)

- Train people in the area of Gospel truth (See Ephesians 3:1-3)
- Train people in the area of Christ-like character (Ephesians 4:1-5:20)
- Train people in the area Godly relationships (Ephesians 5:20-6:9)
- Train people in the skills of ministry (Ephesians 5:10-23)

People use to refer to a square meal, or a square deal. It meant the act was honest, whole, and sound. What is needed today is a square gospel; that is, a balanced ministry wherein the minister teaches gospel truth, challenges growth in Christian character, applies to it human relationships (family, church, and state), and trains people in the skills of Bible study, teaching, praying, leading, evangelizing, and serving, etc.

**Figure 4: Ministry Balance**



## 4. THE FIVE PILLARS OF THE GOSPEL



**2 Timothy 2:2** *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

In Paul's last correspondence with Timothy, he told Timothy to major on discipleship. Four generations are in view: Paul, Timothy, faithful men, and others. We might classify the people as new converts, disciples, disciple-makers, and servant leaders. He wanted Timothy to pass on "the things" he had learned to faithful men who would in turn pass them on to faithful men. But, what are "the things" Paul had in mind to pass on?

Backing up into chapter one, we learn "*the things*" were called "*that good thing*" (1:14), "*sound words*" (1:13), and "*the gospel*" (1:8, 10). Paul commissioned Timothy with the responsibility of passing on the gospel *intact* to the next generation.

The gospel baton has now been passed to us, and it is our responsibility to hand it off to the next generation without dropping it in the exchange. God is not asking us to pass on personal opinions, favorite doctrines, or "seven habits of highly effective people." He is asking us to pass on the gospel *intact*, unblemished, unbroken, uncut, undefiled, unharmed, unhurt, unimpaired, uninjured, unmarred, unscathed, untouched, unviolated, and whole to the next generation.

**Q:** But, what is the gospel? If we do not have a complete understanding of the gospel, how can we pass it on to others? Much of discipleship is like passing on a third of a deck cards and expecting people to enjoy the game.

Ask a person on the street, "What is the gospel?" and you will receive answers like the following: "It is a country song," or, "It is how we ought to love one another," or "It is the Bible."

Theologians have tried to organize their biblical ideas around a central element of theology: Thomas Aquinas organized his system around the Creator God. Martin Luther put justification in the center of his biblical understanding. To Wesley, the Holy Spirit and regeneration were important. Bultmann orientated his theology around the doctrine of conversion. Dietrich Bonhoeffer built his theology on the Lordship of Christ; John Calvin organized his system around the doctrine of grace. Scofield built his system on the return of Christ.

The New Testament (NT) *kerygma* (proclamation) is built on the **Five Pillars of the Gospel**. If you want to be effective in discipleship, you need to understand the five pillars of the gospel.

First, the word "*gospel*" (*euvaggelion*, *euangelion*) is primarily a NT word. Linguistically, it means "good news." However, the linguistic definition does not help us understand its content or structure. Secondly, the gospel is built on OT theology: God, man, sin, Israel, revelation, Law, covenants, and the kingdom of God. While a portion of these ideas are mentioned again and again in the NT, they should be considered as THE FOUNDATION on which the Five Pillars of the Gospel are constructed.

## **PILLAR ONE: THE PERSON OF CHRIST**

**Mark 1:1** *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. . .*

The gospel is the good news that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. The name "*Jesus*" is the OT name for *Joshua* (Vlhsou/). "*Joshua*" (Vlhsou) means "*Jehovah is salvation.*" The term "*Yeshua*" is built on the OT name of Joshua. Mark identifies Jesus as *the Savior*.

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The word “*Christ*” is **not** ‘Jesus’ last name. There is **not** a Mr. & Mrs. Christ. The Greek word for “*Christ*” (Cristou/, Christos) means “anointed one.” The Hebrew term for “*Christ*” is the word *machiyach* (Ax\*yvim) or messiah (Psalm 2:2). Hebrews anointed their prophets, priests, and kings with oil to signify their special, holy calling.

Anointed ones could not hold all three offices in Israel. Only a very special person could serve all three. The Jews, therefore, looked forward to the day when the God’s Messiah—the perfect prophet, priest, king would rule in Israel. He would be David’s greater Son—the One who would usher in the kingdom of God (Isaiah 9:6-8; 11:1-6).

The designation “*Son of God*” is found in Psalm 2 and Isaiah 9:6. The term “*Son*” is laden with theological significance. It does **not** mean Jesus was created. His Sonship is a declared relationship between God the Father and God the Son. As Son, He partakes of the divine nature. As a man, he partakes of human nature. Jesus is the God/man, Israel’s Messiah—fully God and fully man—two distinct natures without confusion or amalgamation.

The first pillar of the gospel is the Person of Christ. The gospel declares that *Jesus* is the *Messiah, the Son of God*. His royal personage includes such prestigious titles as “*Son of Man*” (Matthew 9:6), “*Savior*” (Luke 2:11), “*Logos*” (John 1:1), “*Firstborn*” (Colossians 1:15), “*Creator*” (John 1:2-3), “*Lamb of God*” (John 1:29), “*King of Israel*” (John 1:49), “*Mediator*” (1 Timothy 2:5), “*the Way, the Truth, and the Life*” (John 14:6). Notice the last three titles.

If someone were to ask you this question, “Is Christianity the only way to God?” what would you say?

The answer is “NO!” Christianity is **not** the only way to God. ***Christ*** is the only way to God. Jesus is not *a way* to *Theos*. He is “***the way***.” He is not *a truth*, but *the truth*!” Jesus is the only Mediator that can unite man to God. The task of discipleship is to help “faithful men” to apprehend the fullness of Christ so they can find God and find life (1 John 5:12, 13).

The doctrine of Christ as THE Son of God destroyed centuries of beliefs germane to Hellenistic man, the unity of all being, sometimes called the “great chain of being.” This was the idea that man was different from deity only by degree, not by nature. Thus, in Hellenic thought, a man could be a god; man’s potential was unlimited. Thus, the Caesars saw themselves as gods with power to decree and deserving of worship. Christ’s divine nature and mediation meant freedom from all man’s claims to divinity. The whole view, “*As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be*” is heresy plain and simple.

It is good news that Jesus is the Son of God.

## **PILLAR TWO: THE HISTORY OF CHRIST**

***1 Corinthians 15:1-3 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand . . . For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:***

Notice the three terms that describe the history of Christ: *death, burial, and resurrection*. It is good news that Christ died, was buried, and raised again. But, why is this good news? Would it be good news if your father or mother died? Was it good news when Einstein died? Why is it good news that Christ died?

**Religion is about man's fundamental problem.** Man's fundamental problem is that he is going to die. Can death be overcome? Every religion from Arabian Islam to Zen Buddhism seeks to answer the question, "Is there life after death?" Even atheists have beliefs about man's origin and destiny. All have answers. But are any of their answers true? What is the evidence? What counts as evidence?

As you study religion including evolutionary atheism, you will notice a major difference between Christianity and all other religions. All other religions are a *philosophy* about life and death. Christianity is not merely a philosophy about the afterlife. It is not just about the moral teaching of Jesus. Christianity is an historical account of one man who physically died, was buried because he had died, and who physically, literally came back to life. Over 500 witnesses saw, heard, and touched him. *If Christ died and rose again, he solved man's fundamental problem!* This is good news indeed; that is, if Christ defeated death, he can solve my date with death.

**But, what counts as proof?** When it comes to solving man's fundamental problem, we are not interested in theories or mathematical axioms. We want *synthetic proof* -- legal proof. We want something that will stand up in a court of law. In a courtroom, the judge wants to know: "What did you hear? What did you see? What did you feel?" He is not interested in speculation or opinion, just the facts. The Scripture records that over 500 hundred men experienced the resurrection event: "We saw him dead. We saw him alive! We touched him. We heard him." That was there testimony (1 John 1:1-4).

*Acts 1:3 To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many **infallible proofs**, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:*

It is good news that Jesus died. If he did not die on the cross, but swooned, then he did not defeat death. He only cheated death. If he was not buried, there would be reasonable doubt that he really died. The Roman soldiers, Joseph of Arimathea, and the women knew Jesus was dead. That is why they buried him.

God left investigators with *many infallible proofs* that death can be defeated (Acts 1:3).

The gospel, therefore, is the good news that one man died, was buried, and rose from the grave. *It is good news His history is certain and true.*

### **PILLAR THREE: THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S HISTORY**

Unlike the life and death of ordinary people, the entire history of Christ has meaning.

First, His victorious history gives hope. *Since Jesus solved man's fundamental problem, there is hope that He can solve your fundamental problem.* This is good news. A religion rooted in philosophy and lacking empirical evidence is merely speculation. Christianity is not speculation about life after death, but direct, legal evidence that Jesus defeated death.

***Revelation 1:18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.***

Furthermore, it is important to understand the essential elements of our Lord's history. His history includes His preexistence (PE), His birth and life on earth (L), His death (D), His burial (B), His resurrection (R), His present risen life (PRL), and His coming glory (CG).

- Nouns like "righteousness," "servant," and "prophet" help us understand the meaning of our Lord's life.

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- Words like “*grace*,” “*redemption*,” “*propitiation*,” and “*reconciliation*” define the meaning of His death (Romans 3:24, 25: 5:9, 10).
- Terms like “*victory*” (1 Corinthians 15:54), “*justification*” (Romans 4:25), “*redemption*” or “*forgiveness*” (Ephesians 1:7) interpret the meaning of His resurrection.
- Concepts like “*intercession*” (Hebrews 7:25), “*priesthood*” (Hebrews 7:24), “*Messiah*” (Acts 2:36), and “*Mediator*” (Hebrews 8:6), inform us of the meaning of His PRL.
- Language like “*resurrection*” (1 Corinthians 15:21), “*rapture*” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), “*vengeance*” and “*destruction*” (2 Thessalonians 1:8-10) and “*salvation*” (2 Thessalonian 2:13) help us to interpret the meaning of His CG.

The gospel is the good news that Christ’s history has meaning and significance. It can be interpreted accurately.

## **PILLAR FOUR: THE EFFECTS OF CHRIST’S HISTORY**

*Ephesians 1:3, 13 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ . . . In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise . . .*

It is good news that Christ’s history showers the believer with benefits. When a man believes in the Savior, he is marvelously affected by our Lord’s accomplishments. Four effects are mentioned in the Book of Acts: forgiveness (5:31), Holy Spirit (2:38) eternal life (11:18; 13:48), and justification (13:39).

Through His death he accomplished the purposes of redemption. From his enthroned position at the right hand of God, He gifts the believer with the Holy Spirit. Many benefits are mentioned in the letters of Paul: “*justification*” (Romans 5:1), “*redemption*” (Ephesians 1:7), “*reconciliation*,” (Romans 5:9, 10), “*regeneration*” (Titus 3:5), “*identification*” (Romans 6:3-5), “*adoption*” (Romans 8:15), “*freedom from law (Judaism)*” (Romans 6:14), “*election*” (1 Peter 1:2), “*predestination*” (Ephesians 1:5), “*baptism into his body*” (1 Corinthians 12:13), “*eternal security*” (Romans 11:29), and “*glorification*” (Romans 8:30).

When a person believes in the Savior, the benefits of salvation are bestowed in a first fruits way. The full harvest will occur at the *parousia* (coming) of our Lord. This is the now, not-yet concept of theology.

It is good news that Christ’s history showers the believer with benefits.

## **PILLAR FIVE: THE RESPONSE TO HIS HISTORY**

It is good news that we know how to respond to God.

*1 Timothy 1:9-11 Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.*

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Notice the word “gospel” in this section (1:11). See also the list of behaviors. The directory concerns immoral acts that are contrary to God’s law-order. The gospel not only teaches us about the Person of Christ, His History, the Meaning and Effects of His history, but it teaches us about how to respond to God. A man is not saved by law, but a saved man keeps the law. The law of God cannot regenerate man or society, but it can restrain evil. The gospel does not teach salvation by law, but it does contain law. Failure to see NT commands as case law has been the product of more than a little evil. The gospel teaches us how to please God, and God is pleased when we keep His commandments. It teaches us how to live righteously according to the standard of God’s law (Romans 13:8)

*John 15:10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.*

*1 Corinthians 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.*

*1 John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.*

In ancient times, men did all kinds of despicable acts thinking they were pleasing God. The prophets of Baal cut off fingers and castrated themselves believing this would please Baal (1 Kings 18). Manasseh burned his children as a sacrifice (2 Chronicles 33:6). Balaam taught people to fornicate with temple prostitutes (Numbers 25: 1-6). Pharisee tithed mint and cumin (Luke 11:42).

Today, Hindus lay on beds of nails hoping to excite one of their 330 million deities. In Mexico, Roman Catholics crawl up mountains on bleeding knees seeking to capture the heart of Virgin Mary. Indians dance and chant around campfires hoping to catch the attention of the eternal spirit. Jews avoid shellfish and pork. Islamic sects have members that commit suicide hoping to obtain Allah’s favor. Some people in the Baltic States walk on hot coals in an effort to prove their faith. Other religions sacrifice goats or pigeons in an effort to appease some god. New Agers practice astrology, meditation, and channeling. Do any of these things capture the heart of God?

**The gospel does not leave us guessing as to what pleases God!** What pleases Him is repentance toward sin and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). Two sides of the same coin, faith and repentance are what God requires to inherit the blessings of salvation.

Actually, every command (baptism, holiness, love) in the New Testament tells us what God requires. However, it is essential we understand that it is faith in the Son that unites us to the blessings of salvation and makes us children of God. All others responses are the products of our salvation. Note this difference. It is good news we know how to become a child of God (faith and repentance) and how to please Him once we are His child (obedience to all other commands). The first is called *justification*, and the latter is called *sanctification*.

Margaret Sangster, the social worker, told her colleagues about seeing a small boy in an urban ghetto sitting on the stairs of a tenement. He appeared little more than a bit of twisted human flesh. An automobile struck the youngster. Although not part of her caseload, she took the boy to an orthopedist. She cut through the bureaucratic red tape and raised the funds for his operation. Two years later he came to her office and he turned a cartwheel for her. She said to herself, "If I never accomplish anything else in my life, at least here is one young man to whom I can point where I have made a real difference!" At that point she paused in her presentation and asked, "Where do you think that boy is today?" Several made

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suggestions -- a schoolteacher? A physician? Perhaps a social worker? There was a longer pause. Margaret Sangster said, "No, he is in the penitentiary for one of the foulest crimes a human being can commit." Then she added, "I was instrumental in teaching him how to walk again, but there was no one to teach him where to walk" (Making a Difference).

It is good news that the gospel teaches us how to respond to God to be saved and how to please Him as His child.

**In summary, the Gospel has five pillars:** The Person of Christ; the History of Christ; The Meaning of His History; The Effects of His History for those who believe; and, The Response Required to Please God. If you understand these pillars, you can be an effective, accurate teacher of God's Word.

## 5. SEVEN TITLES OF THE GOSPEL

How do you become a Christian? The correct answer is by believing the gospel. But, if you do not know the gospel, how can you believe it? If you do not believe the gospel, how can you be saved from the judgment to come (Hebrews 9:27)?

This is written so that you might know and believe the gospel, and thus, become a true child of God. The gospel is not a country song. The gospel is not the Bible. The gospel is not about how "we should love one another."

The noun *gospel* (euvagge,lion, euangelion) means "good news." Think of it as the essential content of the early Christian message. It can be defined and identified in the NT.

The verb *euangelizo* is used 55 times in the New Testament and it means "to bring good news" or "to announce glad tidings."

The noun *evangelist* is used 33 times and it describes the one who preaches the message of the gospel.

Today the gospel competes with many wild and extreme forms of thought. Have you have heard the term, "dumbing down of the church?" This refers to simplistic sermons in the pulpit, which produce ignorant Christians. Have you heard of the "psychologization of the church?" This refers to the integration of psychology with the gospel. Have you heard of the word "*cult*?" This term refers to those who distort the gospel. Our culture is tossed about by the crosscurrent of ideas, and it is essential that we sail our ship into the harbor of the gospel on a clear day.

James Stewart, a gospel preacher, recognized **Seven Scriptural Titles** associated with the Greek word *euangelion* that are worth recording.

### THE EUANGELION OF GOD

***Romans 1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God.***

..

**The word *euangelion* is a message from God** that has its roots in the history of His Son.

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The title "*gospel of God*" speaks of **the origin of the message**. It is not from man. Early Christians did not make it up. It is not a myth and it did not evolve from early Christian folklore. The gospel is from God the Father. The gospel is His revelation and it is here because of His initiative.

Have you heard about the dial-a-prayer for atheists? You dial the number and nobody answers. The Bible tells us something different. He has a telephone number and it is **JER 333**. "Call unto me, and I will answer thee . . ." (Jeremiah 33:3).

The title "*gospel of God*" not only tells us the genesis of the message, but it announces the good news of *God's existence*. It tells us that there is *one, personal, infinite, virtuous, triune Spirit* who desires to be a redemptive Father, and Who has sent His one and only Son to be the Savior for sinners (Matthew 1:21). The good news is that there is a God who hears and cares. He is YHWH, the Great "I AM THAT I AM," the God who exists.

The title "*gospel of God*" not only announces the origin of the gospel and the good news of God's Being, it also proclaims *the rule of God*. It declares that God is sovereign and is acting in history. He reigns (Psalm 97).

## THE EUANGELION OF CHRIST

***Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes.***

The title "*gospel of Christ*" speaks about **the theme of the message**.

**The gospel is about the person of Christ.** It is good news that Jesus is God's Son, one in person, co-equal with the Father. Some have lost sight of who Christ really is. Ideas like, "Jesus was a good man," or that "Jesus was created," or that "He is one of many religious teachers," or that "He was not omniscient" injure the truth about Christ. In the early church, heretics tended to deny the humanity of Christ (1 John 4:1-4). Today, cults tend to deny the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, and His resurrection.

Christians understand Jesus to be the God/man, truly God and truly man. John reveals Him as the "Word" (Logos).

***John 1:1 In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with Theos, and the Logos was Theos.***

In the Greek language, Christ's deity is very clear (kai. qeo.j h=n o` lo,goj). The Greek letter "o`" (*ho*) is a definite article indicating the subject (nominative) of the sentence. It should be read this way: "*The Word was God.*" The word "qeo.j" does not have an article because it is the predicate nominative.

The official title of the Savior is "*The Lord Jesus Christ*." His name "*Jesus*" is his human name and it is used 608 times before his ascension, but it is used only 62 times after his ascension. The title "*The Lord Jesus Christ*" is never mentioned before he ascended, and it used 81 times after His ascension. When First Century men recognized the supreme state of Christ's exaltation, they were cut to the heart and surrendered to Him as Lord and Master. He is Lord, not autonomous man. He is Lord, not Caesar. He is Lord, not the state! This truth gave the NT Christians the power to resist Rome and its arrogance in claiming that Augustus was some type of god. Thus, when Peter declared that Jesus is Lord and that there was no other Name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved, he declared war on the Roman Empire (Acts 4:12).

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Furthermore, the gospel is not only about the person of Christ, **it is about the *history of Christ***.

**Religion is about man's fundamental problem.** Man's fundamental problem is death. Religion, therefore, is any philosophy or belief about death. Can death be overcome? That is the question of the ages.

The "*good news*" is that Christ died, was buried, and rose again (1 Corinthians 15:1-12).

It is not good news when someone dies, but in the case of Christ, it is gospel. If he had not truly died, he could not have risen from the dead and truly demonstrate his victory over death. Jesus died. His body was placed in a grave. Over the next few weeks, over 500 witnesses saw him alive. He literally, tangibly, physically, bodily rose from the grave. This is good news! Christ defeated death. If Christ has power over death, He has power to resolve our fundamental problem regarding death. Why go to Mohammed or Buddha? They are still in the grave.

Not only does the gospel tell us about the person of Christ and his victorious history, it tells us ***the meaning of that history***. When a person dies, their death has little historical significance other than they are deceased. Christ's death was different. His death buds with implication. The terms "redemption," "grace," "propitiation," and "justification" are a few of the NT words that tell us how the death of Christ is to be interpreted.

Take the word "*redemption*" for example: His death was redemptive. The word "*redemption*" (avpolutrw,sew, *apolutrosis*) means "to set free" or "to release." Christ died as our substitute for our sinners. Because He paid the penalty for your sins, you can be "set free" from the guilt, shame, and penalty of sin. Is not this good new?

## THE GLORIOUS EUANGELION OF CHRIST

***2 Corinthians 4:3, 4 The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.***

The title "*glorious gospel*" refers to **the intrinsic worth of the message**. It is glorious because it presents the majesty and glory of the Redeemer. Glory is to Christ what a light is to a light bulb. Glory is the brilliance and beauty of His person. The glorious gospel reveals the pre-existent Son who shared the glory of the Father and laid aside his radiance, not his deity, to become a man. He was not only a man, He was a humble servant to men (John 17:5; Philippians 2:6ff).

The glorious gospel reveals the hidden glory of Christ disclosed while He was on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1). It displayed the glory of the ascended Christ in his official capacity as sovereign Lord (Revelations 1:12ff). It reveals that believers receive eternal life (John 3:16), are given the glory of God to shine in their hearts to change the inner man (2 Corinthians 4:6; John. 17:22), and that their bodies will be changed and made like His glorious body at His coming (1 Corinthians. 6:20; 15:51; 1 John 3:2, 3). No wonder it is called a "*glorious gospel*!"

## THE EUANGELION OF THE GRACE OF GOD

***Acts 20:24 I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.***

The title "*gospel of grace*" describes **the character of the gospel**. It is the gospel of grace.



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Two aged saints were sitting in a rest home when a gentleman wandered by and asked them to describe salvation. One replied, "Something for nothing." "Yes," replied the other, "but it is even better than that. It is everything for nothing."

To appreciate grace you must understand depravity. Man's depravity makes grace necessary. The sinner is like a leopard that cannot change his spots. Like dandruff, we all have it. Like sheep with parasites, we must all be dipped and cleansed. Cleansing comes by the blood of Christ. Man cannot save himself, nor can his salvation be bought or earned.

The gospel is not about what we need to do for God, *but what God has done for us through Christ.*

God sent His Son to pay for our sin. It is because He died as our substitute that we can be cleansed and forgiven.

In Exodus 20:24, right after YHWH gave the Ten Commandments, He described the altar on which Israel was to offer sacrifices to Him. The altar could not be made from cut stones, nor could it have steps ascending up to it. The lesson is clear! Man cannot ascend to God on the basis his own merit. Man's efforts are not acceptable on God's altar. God planned the sacrifice. And by grace, He has done it all that is necessary or your salvation by offering Christ as your sacrificial Lamb on Calvary's altar.

**Harry Ironside** was once asked how he could know the truth with so many religions on earth. He responded that there were only two religions: **Do** and **Done**. Which one do we follow?

## THE EUANGELION OF YOUR SALVATION

*Ephesians 1:13 And you were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.*

The title "*gospel of your salvation*" speaks of **the effects of the gospel**. It saves souls from condemnation and judgment. It redeems, justifies, and reconciles one to God (Romans 5:1 ff).

It also addresses **the response** required. It is the gospel of your salvation. No man is born a Christian. Even though he may be taught about Christ as a child, there is a point in time when the man must personally receive Christ as his Lord and Savior. Conversion is not a process. Like birth, there is a day of salvation (John 3:3). Prayer does not convert a soul. Faith in Christ saves the man (Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation happens when one hears the facts of the gospel and believes the message (Romans 10:17). It is not something one has to earn (Titus 3:5). It is a gift that is received by faith (Acts 20:21). And that gift will not be taken away (Romans 11:29). When one places his faith in (en) into (eis) or (epi) upon Christ, he receives forgiveness of sins. This is good news (Acts 13:38).

Spurgeon use to say, "Never put a question mark where God has put a period." Have we come to a place in our life where we have placed our faith in Christ, and accepted His work on our behalf? This is personal possession that leads to salvation.

## THE EUANGELION OF PEACE

*Ephesians 6:15 Stand . . . with your feet shod. . . with the gospel of peace.*

**Peace** is a **fruit of the gospel**. One receives peace with God on the grounds of the gospel: the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. To appreciate peace one must understand the war. When Henry

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Thoreau, the naturalist, was near death, a friend asked him, "Henry, have you made peace with God?" His arrogant reply was, "I didn't know that we had ever quarreled."

Man's war with the Creator is just as profound as the CIA's war with the Columbian drug bosses.

There is peace available in the gospel. But it has to be on God's terms, not man's terms. God's judgment on sin at Calvary makes it possible for Him to extend to men a treaty of peace, but each man, the enemy, must embrace the Son (Psalm 2:12).

Don Richardson brought to life a vivid illustration of this in his book *Peace Child*. Peace could only be attained between warring Sawi Tribes if the head of the tribe would give his son to the enemy to rear into manhood. When the son was given, the opposition tribe knew the chief meant business. Each tribe member was required to touch the child. This was their way of confirming a commitment to a *covenant of peace*. If you want peace God, you must touch the Son by faith (Matthew 11:28, 29; John 6:53).

## MY EUANGELION

***Romans 2:16 This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.***

Did you notice the phrase, "*my gospel*"? The term refers to ***personal ownership of the gospel***. It is not until *God's gospel* becomes *my gospel* that the world will know of the Savior. We must not only take possession of the gospel for our own salvation, we must embrace it as our life message. We must come to see ourselves as a steward committed with a sacred trust -- a trust we must guard as well as dispense.

*Paul termed it "My gospel;" not that he had degraded it by his personal eccentricities or diverted it by selfish appropriation, but the gospel was put into the heart and lifeblood of the man Paul, as a personal trust to be executed by his Pauline traits, to be set aflame and empowered by the fiery energy of his fiery soul. Paul's sermons -- what were they? Where are they? Skeletons, scattered fragments, afloat on the sea of inspiration! But the man Paul, greater than his sermons, lives forever, in full form, feature and stature, with his molding hand on the Church. The preaching is but a voice. The voice in silence dies, the text is forgotten, the sermon fades from memory; the preacher lives. (EM Bounds)*

Back in the old days of small business, the word "sons" was stenciled on storefronts: "Fleming & Sons;" "Johnson and Sons;" "Blackwell & Sons." When sons entered their father's business and assumed responsibility, they shared the title. Can you say with the apostle Paul that you are "*God's fellow worker*" (2 Corinthians 6:1)?

In his book, *Angola Beloved*, T. Earnest Wilson tells of a Chilonda Elder who as a young convert tried for months to tell the elders the gospel story every evening at the camp fire. But night after night the tribal leaders rebuffed him. One night the opportunity came, and he told this story.

There was a drought in the land and all the animals came together to discuss where they could find water. The turtle came forward and said he knew, but the lion cuffed the turtle with his paw and said that he knew a place from which he used to drink as a cub. They all followed the lion, but when they arrived there was no water. But the turtle stepped forward again and said, "I know where there is water." This time, the elephant rebuked him, and they all followed the elephant to his ancient water hole. But when they arrived it was a cracked dry riverbed. One after another, from the monkey to the rabbit, they all had

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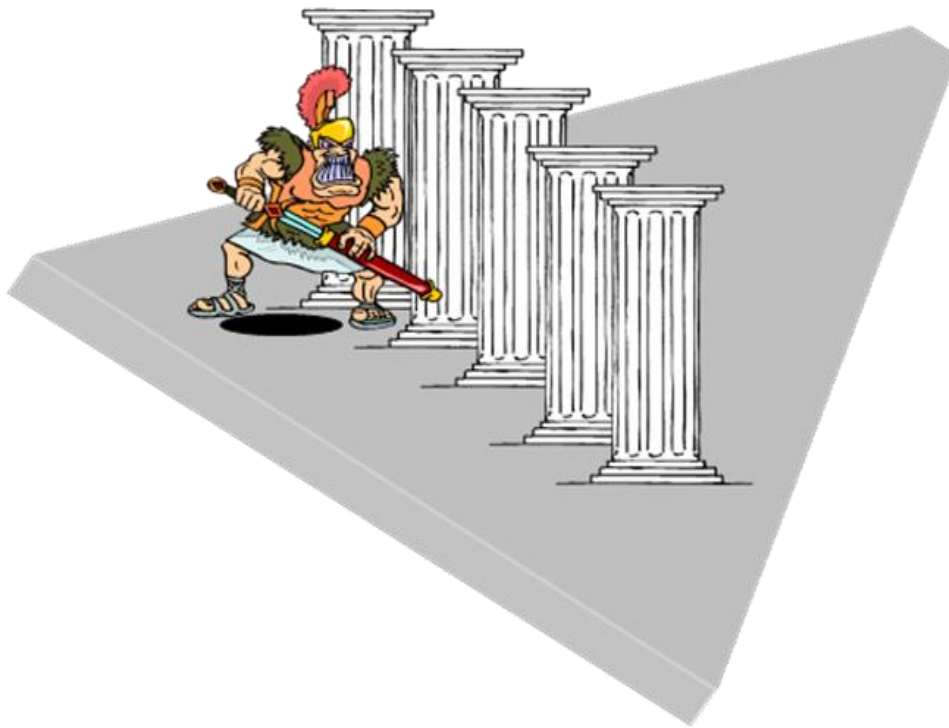
their turn to try and lead the animals to water. Lastly, the turtle stepped forward and said, "I know where there is water." Very thirsty, they followed the turtle. He led them to a rock and nearby was an artesian spring.

Sanji ended his illustration with the obvious application: "We have been following you elders for a long time among the dark paths of witchcraft and fear and death and we are thirsty still, but I know where there is living water!"

Sanji told them the gospel story.

The gospel of Christ is living water. Will you drink deeply from the well of the gospel?

## **PILLAR ONE: THE PERSON OF CHRIST**



## 6. HISTORICAL VIEWS ABOUT CHRIST

**The first Pillar of the Gospel is the Person of Christ.** The gospels are dedicated to the theme of “*Who is Jesus?*” Mark states his subject as, “*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*” (John 1:1). The Magi came to see one born “*King of the Jews*” (Matthew 2:2). John introduces us the “*Logos*” (John 1:1). John the Baptist announces Jesus as “*the Lamb of God*” (John 1:29). Paul summarizes his teaching under the heading, “*the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Acts 28:31). We would do well to heed the Father’s Command, “*This is my Son, hear ye Him*” (Matthew 17:5).

The disciples in a state of wonder asked one to another, “What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (Mark 4:41). Truly, there is no more important question in the world than this one, “***Who is Jesus?***” Was he a god, a phantom, a lunatic, a deluded rabbi, an exalted man, the best among us, or maybe the worst among us?

1 Timothy 3:9 Without controversy<sup>5</sup>, great is the mystery of godliness<sup>6</sup>: God<sup>7</sup> was manifest in the flesh

*Hebrews 1:1-3 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person (carakth.r th/j u`posta,sewj auvtou/), and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;*

Richard Dawson, the bitter, infamous atheist spit out this venom in these words:

*“The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.” (Richard Dawson, The God of Delusion)*

If this is what he felt about the God of the OT what does he think about His Son?

### RECONCILING HIS DIETY AND HUMANITY

R.A. Torrey said the real task of understanding Christ is “to reconcile the doctrine of the deity of Christ with the doctrine of the real humanity of Christ. Our first business is to find out what the various passages

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<sup>5</sup> The word “without controversy” (o`mologoume,nwj) is an adverb that means “undeniably.”

<sup>6</sup> The word “godliness” (th/j euvsebei,aj) is in the genitive and is usually translated “godliness.” But, here it may be more appropriate to translate the word euvsebei,aj as “God manifest” is at least associate with the nature of God since the previous verse (14) talks about the “house of God” and the “church of the living God;” and, since the next verse (16) reveals “Who” was manifest in the flesh.

<sup>7</sup> The word “God” is a relative pronoun (Oj) referring to God.

mean in their grammatical interpretation. Then if we can, reconcile them. If not, believe them both and leave the reconciliation to increasing knowledge,” (Sanders, 1971, p. 88).

Early church figures like Athanasius used the term “hypostatic union” to describe the two natures of our Lord Jesus Christ. Orthodoxy affirms the hypostatic union: There is one person, the Lord Jesus Christ; He has two natures: a divine nature and a human nature. He is not two persons, but one.

A correct view of Christ is necessary for a proper understanding of the gospel. Errors occur, when one either adds to the gospel, or denies a particular truth connected to the gospel. In the first pillar, errors regarding Christ are twofold: a) denial of his deity, or b) a denial of his humanity. The historical problem is that men tend to reduce revelation about the unity of God to something that man can understand; i.e. to see the Father and Son as one in personality, or to divide the Godhead separating the Father and Son into two distinct substances—thus creating two gods. Regardless of the names, the following historical errors occurred again and again in history (Thiessen, 1979, p. 206-208).

Modern trends in theological literature and modern movies about Jesus tend to deny the historicity of Christ or to distort Biblical truth about him and turn Him into some kind of delusional character. History is replete with groups that advocate perverse beliefs about Christ. Here are a few:

### **The Ebionites**

The word *Ebionites*, or *Ebionæans* (*Ebionaiōi*), is a transliteration of an Aramean word meaning “poor men.” It either refers to their poverty of understanding of Christ or their poverty of understanding the law to which they plead loyalty, or to the poor opinions they held about the Savior. The Ebionites believed that Jesus so fulfilled the Mosaic Law that God chose him to be the Messiah. This happened at his baptism when he received the Spirit. They denied the Divinity and the virginal birth of Christ; they clung to the observance of Jewish law; they regarded Paul as an apostate, and used only a Gospel according to St. Matthew (Catholic Encyclopedia on Ebionites).

Among the early Jewish Christians were the heretical Ebionites, some of whom believed Jesus was simply a virtuous man, but a mortal, and others who thought he was born of the Virgin Mary, but refused to acknowledge he had pre-existed. (See Eusebius, 263-339 A.D.)

### **The Gnostics**

In juxtaposition to the Jewish heresy regarding Christ is the Greek perversion. This system tried to understand the nature of evil through dualism: good and evil, spirit and flesh, higher and lower, heaven and earth. Since flesh was evil in the mind of the Gnostics, God could not be associated with flesh. Cerinthian Gnosticism taught that the divine Christ came upon Jesus at his baptism and departed shortly before his death. Doetic Gnosticism held that Jesus was a kind of *phantom* and only appeared to be in the flesh.

### **Arians**

Arius of Alexandria (4<sup>th</sup> century), hurled into the arena of theology, taught that though Jesus may be called God, he was not true God and in no way equal with God in essence or eternity; that Christ was the logos, *the first created being*, a divine helper in creation. The Logos entered the body taking the place of the spirit. He was not fully God, nor was He fully man. Arius affirmed that Jesus was not truly divine but a created being. Arius’ basic premise was the uniqueness of God, who is alone self-existent and immutable; the Son who is not self-existent, cannot be God. To support this view, the following texts were used:

*Mark 13:32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.*

*John 5:19 Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise John 5:19.*

*John 14:28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.*

*1 Corinthians 15:28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all*

The Nicean Council (325AD)<sup>8</sup> rejected Arianism and declared it heresy. The Council declared that Christ was begotten, not made, that He was one in substance with the Father.

### **The Nicene Creed 325 A.D.**

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

*Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.*

*And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.*

*And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen. (The Nicene Creed)*

### **The Apollinarians**

Apollinarians, a denomination in the fourth century, from Apollinarian Bishop of Laodicea in Syria about 361, asserted that Christ's person was composed of a union of the true divinity and a human body,

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<sup>8</sup> The First Council of Nicaea was the first ecumenical council held by the church. It is best known for its **formulation of the Nicene Creed, the earliest dogmatic statement of Christian orthodoxy**. The council was convened in 325 by the Roman emperor Constantine I in an attempt to settle the controversy raised by Arianism over the nature of the Trinity. Nearly all those who attended came from the eastern Mediterranean region. The Nicene Creed formulated that **God the Father and God the Son were consubstantial and coeternal and that the Arian belief in a Christ created by and thus inferior to the Father was heretical**. Arius himself was excommunicated and banished from the western church.

endowed with a sensitive soul; but without the reasonable one, the divinity supplying its place; the human body united to the divine spirit making one nature only. The danger was to merge the two natures of Christ so as to lose his deity and humanity, or too separate them making Christ two persons. Apollinaris followed the later and argued that Jesus had a true body and animal soul, but not a rational spirit or mind. The Logos filled the place of human intelligence, thus denying the deity of Christ and destroying his humanity at the same time. The First Council of Constantinople (381 AD) condemned this as heresy (See The Apollinarian Heresy, a.d. 362-381).

### **Nestorians**

Nestorius denied the real union of the two natures of Christ into one person. The Logos dwelt in the man Jesus much like the spirit dwells in the believer. He differed from other men only in the plenitude of the Spirit He possessed. Nestorius taught the two individual natures of Christ, the human and the divine, are joined in conjunction ("synapheia") rather than in hypostatic union. Nestorianism taught that the human and divine essences of Christ are separate and that there are two natures, the man Jesus and the divine Logos, united in Christ. Thus, Nestorius denied the deity of Christ. The Synod of Ephesus<sup>9</sup> condemned this heresy (431 AD). Nestorius, nevertheless, had great influence in Mesopotamia and his gospel traveled to the China Sea (The Nestorians).

### **The Eutychians**

Unlike the Nestorians, the Eutychians held that there was only one nature in Christ; that He was totally divine, even his body. They were called "Monophysites" because they reduced the two natures into one. Eutyches maintained, that there was only one nature in Jesus Christ. The divine nature, according to them, had so entirely swallowed up the human, that the latter could not be distinguished; so much so that, it was inferred our Lord had nothing of humanity but the appearance. The Council of Chalcedon condemned this teaching in 451 A.D. (Eutychianism).

### **The Council of Chalcedon 451 A.D.**

The Bishop of Rome, Leo I or "the Great," sitting on the throne of Peter, got it straight and his views prevailed at the Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon in 451 A.D. The great truth is that the eternal Son of God took upon Himself our humanity (one *prosopon*) in the hypostatic union (one hypostasis). He did not acquire deity! Jesus was fully God and fully man in one *prosopon* sharing the hypostasis of God. Consider the Chalcedon Formula of A.D. 451:

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<sup>9</sup> The holy and great Synod therefore says, that the only begotten Son, born according to nature of God the Father, very God of very, Light of Light, by whom the Father made all things, came down, and was incarnate, and was made man, suffered, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven. These words and these decrees we ought to follow, considering what is meant by the being incarnate and made man. For we do not say that the nature of the Word was changed and became flesh, or that it was converted into a whole man consisting of and body; but rather that the Word having personally united to himself flesh animated by a rational soul, did in an ineffable and inconceivable manner become man, and was called the Son of Man, not merely as willing or being pleased to be so called, neither on account of taking to himself a person, but because the two natures being brought together in a true union, there is of both one Lord Jesus Christ and one Son; for the difference of the natures is not taken away by the union, but rather the divinity and the humanity make perfect for us the one Lord Jesus Christ by their ineffable and inexpressible union (From the Epistle of Cyril to Nestorius).



**THEREFORE**, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once **complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man**, consisting also of a *reasonable soul and body*; **of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood**; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the Godbearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, **but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ**; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

*The hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ demolishes any man-made faith claims that man can become a god.* The doctrine of Christ destroyed centuries of beliefs germane to Hellenistic man, the unity of all being, sometimes called the “great chain of being.” This was the idea that man was different from deity only by degree, not by nature. Thus, in Hellenic thought, a man could be a god; man’s potential was unlimited. Thus, the Caesars saw themselves as gods with power to decree and deserving of worship. Christ’s mediation meant freedom from all man’s claims to divinity. The whole view that man can be a god, is heresy plain and simple.

**The Tome of Leo** was approved and adopted as follows:

Following, then, the holy fathers, we unite in teaching all men to confess the one and only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This selfsame one is **perfect both in deity and in humanness**; this selfsame one is also **actually God and actually man**, with a rational soul (meaning human soul) and a body. **He is of the same reality as God as far as his deity is concerned and of the same reality as we ourselves as far as his humanness is concerned**; thus like us in all respects, sin only excepted. Before time began he was begotten of the Father, in respect of his deity, and now in these “last days,” for us and behalf of our salvation, this selfsame one was born of Mary the virgin, who is God-bearer in respect of his humanness.

We also teach that we apprehend this one and only Christ-Son, Lord, only-begotten — **in two natures; and we do this without confusing the two natures**, without transmuting one nature into the other, without dividing them into two separate categories, without contrasting them according to area or function. The distinctiveness of each nature is not nullified by the union. Instead, the “properties” of each nature are conserved and **both natures concur in one “person” and in one reality (hypostasis)**. They are not divided or cut into two persons, but are together the one and only and only-begotten Word (Logos), God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus have the prophets of old testified; thus the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us; thus the Symbol of Fathers (the Nicene Creed) has handed down to us.

Therefore, now that we have set forth all these things with a care and diligence exact in every respect, the holy and universal Synod defines once and for all that no one may profess, write up or compose, think, or teach to others, any other faith. (The Chalcedon Creed)

### **Modern Jews**

According to Rabbi L.E. Miller, Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, in his lecture “Perspectives on the Man Called Jesus,” Jewish people may see Jesus as a gifted teacher, but they do not see him as the

Messiah or the King of Israel or Divine. Like many rabbis of his day, he suffered martyrdom. Jewry today holds no honor for Jesus and see him as deluded rabbi. The man Christians see as the Messiah, Savior of humanity, Redeemer of all our sins, is seen by Jews as a false prophet who came to turn humanity away from God's true path of the law. They base this on the fact that Jesus did not build the 3<sup>rd</sup> temple (Ezekiel 40ff), gather the Jews back to Israel (Isaiah 43:5-6), or usher in an era of universal peace (Isaiah 2:4).

### **Jehovah Witnesses**

Jehovah Witnesses follow the Arian heresy that gained prominence in the third century. They believe that God the Father is greater than Jesus; that Jesus was created by God and under God's authority, but that he is not equal with God. At best He is "a god" but not the Jehovah God of the Old Testament. Therefore, the Jehovah Witnesses do not worship Jesus as Lord and God.<sup>10</sup> They believe he was created and became an important prophet declaring truth about Father YHWH. (Who is Jesus Christ?)

Jesus is Jehovah's most precious Son—and for good reason. He is called "the firstborn of all creation," for he was God's first creation. There is something else that makes this Son special. He is the "only-begotten Son." This means that Jesus is the only one directly created by God.

The Son was created. Obviously, then, he had a beginning, whereas Jehovah God has no beginning or end (Jehovah Witness Official Website).

### **Mormons**

According to the prophet Lorenzo Snow, "As Man is, God once was . . . and as God is, man may become." Jesus was the spirit brother of Lucifer, a man like us, who so excelled in spiritual disciplines that he became a god, a part of the godhead council. He has a goddess wife, and a physical body—because God the Father has a physical body with flesh and bones. Jesus was our example of how to attain godhood, something that we can all accomplish. The Mormon Church views Jesus and Satan as spirit brothers and sons of God. God put forth His plan of salvation for the world, and Satan proposed his own plan. Jesus accepted the Father's plan and offered to implement it as the Savior. The Father chose Jesus, and the spirit of Jesus was given a body through the Virgin Mary. He was crucified on a Roman cross, and rose from the dead three days later to establish His deity. The character and life of Jesus is attainable by anyone who performs at such a righteous level. (Online: *All About Cults*, "What Mormons Believe")

In 1998, former President Jimmy Carter denounced his denomination (SBC) because he believed Mormons are Christians and the denominational leaders denounced Mormons as part of the Christian Community:

***Newsweek:*** *Do you think a Mormon is a Christian?*

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<sup>10</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses disagree with the Christian belief that Jesus was "fully God and fully man." Witnesses teach that Jesus was not God, but rather God's first creation. Jesus existed in pre-human form as God's agent of creation and God's chief spokesman (the Word), and took on human form as the man Jesus by means of a virgin birth. The purpose of Jesus' incarnation on earth was threefold in the view of Witnesses: (1) To teach the truth about God; (2) to provide a model of a perfect life for people to follow; and (3) to sacrifice his life to set humans free from sin and death. His crucifixion was not on a cross, but a single upright stake. After his death, God raised Jesus from the dead "as a spirit creature" and Jesus returned to his home in heaven. Jesus was not made King, however, until 1914. (Jehovah's Witnesses Official Web Site).

*Carter: Yes, I do. I have a cousin who is a Mormon and she married one of the Marriott family. I don't know anyone who's more devout in their faith than she and her family. I admire them very much (Quoted by Denny Burk on March 22, 2007 in CULTURE, THEOLOGY/BIBLE, DennyBurk.com. Professor of Biblical Studies at Boyce College.)*

### **The Anti-historical Movement**

In modern times (the last 100 years), liberal scholars have been in search for the “Historical Jesus.” Believing that the gospels are fabrications of the early church, these people separate the miracles of Jesus from the person of Jesus (Jesus Seminars in California). That is, they do not hold to the historicity of Christ or to the authenticity of the NT records. Since in their view the gospel accounts are distorted—a product of history, they have been researching and writing about their supposed discoveries about the true character of the man Jesus. Since these researchers hold strictly to the philosophy of naturalism, they have little tolerance for a Divine Jesus (Schweitzer, Quest for the Historical Jesus, 2005, Amazon).

### **The Orthodox View**

“There is one Jesus Christ, but he has two natures, the human and the divine. He is truly God and truly man, composed of body and rational soul. He is consubstantial with the Father in his deity and consubstantial with man in his humanity, except for sin. In his deity he was begotten of the Father before time, and in his humanity born of the virgin Mary. Their union does not diminish the distinction between the natures, but the specific character of each nature is preserved and they are united in one person. Jesus is not split or divided into two persons; he is one person, the Son of God.”

*“He continueth to be God and man, in two distinct natures and one person forever.”*  
(Westminster Shorter Confession)

III. In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: the Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son. (The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1646)

*“We confess that He is Very God and Very Man; Very God by His power to conquer death, and Very Man that He might die for us.”* Belgic Confession (Sanders, 1971, p. 87)

*“It is just as heretical to affirm the deity of our Lord while omitting the reality of His humanity, as it is to affirm the humanity while omitting the deity”* (Sanders, 1971, p. 87).

*“I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell. The third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead”* (The Apostles Creed).

In conclusion, grasping the true identity of Christ is perhaps the most important pursuit on which one can embark. According to Jesus own words one's eternal destiny is determined by one's beliefs about Christ: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

In interrogating Christ, Herod and his soldiers “set him at nought, and mocked him” (Luke 23:11). To Herod, Christ was nothing -- a persona non grata. But, to the Christian, Christ is our Everything!

## 7. THE NAMES AND TITLES OF CHRIST

When people meet, the first information they receive about an individual is their name. This is the approach that John makes when writing his gospel. The names and titles of Christ reveal Who He is.

### THE LOGOS (John 1:1)

The term *logos* is found only in John’s works. Jesus never referred to Himself as *logos*. The reason for using the term is ambiguous (Ladd, 1974, p. 238):

**Aristotle** saw *logos* as the human ability to speak and reason.

*“Like bees and herd animals, human beings live together in groups. Unlike bees or herd animals, humans have **the capacity for speech** – or, in the Greek, *logos*. As we have seen, *logos* means not only speech **but also reason**. Here the linkage between speech and reason is clear: the purpose of speech, a purpose assigned to men by nature, **is to reveal what is advantageous and harmful, and by doing so to reveal what is good and bad, just and unjust**. This knowledge makes it possible for human beings to live together, and at the same time makes it possible for us to pursue justice as part of the virtuous lives we are meant to live.”* (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy - Aristotle) (Emphasis mine).

**T. W. Manson** identifies the term *logos* as a Hebrew concept similar to the word *debar Yahweh*, the word of the Lord (Genesis 15:1), the creative Word of God in the original creation (T. W. Manson, 1935. Teachings of Jesus, Cambridge Press.).

**Heraclitus** (6th C. B.C.), a Greek philosopher, was the first to use the term. He taught that life was in a state of flux, but that there was an eternal principle of order in the universe known as *the logos*.

**The Stoics**, caught in the Greek dualistic dilemma, saw the *logos* as the basis of rational and moral life, as a unitary idea to solve the problem of duality. They taught that the universe was conceived as forming a single living whole permeated in all its parts by a primitive power conceived as a never resting all-pervading fiery vapor, or the *logos*. The *divine logos* was called the *spermatikos* or *formative forces* that energized the manifold phenomenon of nature and life. This *logos* is the basis of rational order and the rational man seeks to live in accordance with nature.

**Philo**, the Greek Alexandrian Jew (20 B.C.-42 A.D.), wedded Greek philosophy with the Jewish religion. Though an allegorist, he employed the term *logos* to mediate between the transcendent God and creation. God himself is absolute and outside the material universe. He comprehends all things, but is uncomprehended. He is outside time and space. God is a pure being and cannot create the world, therefore, He employed reason, or the *logos*, the universal plan in the mind of God, the original pattern of the world, the power that fashioned it.

**Hellenists:** Pimandres beheld blinding light and an appalling darkness. Out of the light came *a holy logos* as a creative power, separating the lower from the higher element, invading the chaos and bringing order. *The Hermetic logos is the active expression of the mind of God.*

**Jews:** The word of God was employed to create the world. The *logos* is not a substance, but a semi-hypostatized existence that accomplishes the divine purpose (Genesis 1:3; Psalm 33:6, 9; 47:15-18; Isaiah 4:8; Ezekiel 37:4-5).

**Wisdom literature:** *The logos or wisdom* is semi-hypostatized. She can do all things, renew all things, order all things, fashion all things, and bring men to God (Proverbs 7:4).

**Ladd concludes** (1974): “The Logos . . . is intelligible only when we admit that Logos is . . . associated with the Word of the Lord . . . also bears in Stoicism as modified by Philo, and parallel to the idea of Wisdom in other Jewish writers. It is the rational principle in the universe . . . a divine hypostasis in which the eternal God is revealed and active” (Ladd, 1974, p. 240, 241).

**John’s use of logos:** By employing the term *logos* John tutors us about the pre-existence of Christ as a divine Person; union with God; existence in Divine substance; the eternal being and the “I Am”; His divinity; His humanity (John 1:14); His agency in creation -- “from (ek) God and through (dia) Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians. 8:6; Colossians 1:16); His mediation between God and man; and His manifestation of God to men as the Revelator of life (John 1:4), light (1:4-5), grace (1:14), truth (1:14), glory (1:14), and God himself (1:18).

**Assertion of deity of Jesus:** By using the phrase “the word was God” (qeo.j h=n o` lo,gos), John expressed two ideas: that the Word was deity, but that the Word was not fully identical with deity (Ladd, 1974 p. 242). The definite article is only used with Logos. If the definite article were used with *theos* (qeo.j), he would have inferred that all of God was in the Logos. And, this would not be true. John is telling us that the invisible God, the Creator of the world, was manifest in the flesh; that Jesus is the visible expression of the invisible God; truly God, truly man.

In becoming flesh, the Logos of John refuted all Hellenistic and Gnostic dualism that separated God from the world. He entered the world, not as a phantom, but a real man in human flesh. The word “dwell” is the Greek word *eskenosen* (evskh,nwsen) which stands for “tabernacle.” The Logos tabernacled among men (John 1:14). Consequently, the Logos became a biblical representation for God’s presence. God was in Christ expressing Himself to all the world. To worship God, one must worship Jesus and to Worship the Logos, one worships God.

“In the beginning” is unmistakably associated with Genesis 1:1 – “In the beginning God;” “In the beginning the Word;” “in the beginning Christ.”

## **MESSIAH**

The OT concept of Messiah was that of a unique, divinely chosen individual who would shatters the powers of wickedness and usher in God’s kingdom destroying paganism and delivering God’s people from their enemies (Matthew 1:1; Mark 1:1-2) (Ladd, 1974, p. 243).

The term “*Messiah*” (Cristou, Christos) is not a proper name, but a title like “president” or “senator.” There is not a Mr. & Mrs. Christ. *Christos* means “*anointed*.” Kings, priests, and prophets were anointed

as they were inaugurated into office (Leviticus 8:12; 1 Samuel 16:13). However, the OT looked forward to a very special Being who would be God's special anointed prophet, priest, and king.

The term was closely associated with designations like the "*The Son of God*" and "*The King of Israel*" (John 1:41, 49). He was a son . . . but also a father (Isaiah 9:6).

His kingship was not political, but spiritual, i.e. it did not confront or challenge existing political structures in his day except when he cleansed the temple and took charge of His Father's house. Don't hear what is not being said. This does not mean that Christ's authority does not apply to politics. His mission on earth was first redemptive. Man had to be delivered from the power of sin before he could be delivered from the tyranny of despots. His kingdom was not of this world (John 12:13, 15; 18:33, 36); i.e. His authority did not originate with man, but from the Father. He was from heaven. The origin of his kingdom is from heaven, but his rule extends to this earth and all the affairs of man. In saying, "My kingdom is not of this world," our Lord is clarifying the *origin* of his authority, not the *realm* of his authority. Because his authority is from the Father, his authority is absolute even in this earthly realm. He is Lord of heaven and earth (Acts 17:24).

*Jeremiah 10:7 Who would not fear thee, O King of Nations?*

The term "*Messiah*" is not adequate to define Jesus. He was more than "Messiah." He is the "Son of God."

He fulfilled the personal, historical requirements. He is the very special prophet, priest, king announced in the OT. His teaching were kingly; His powers prophetic; and His work priestly.

- He is the Seed that cruised Satan's power (Genesis 3:15).
- He is the Seed of Seth, Noah, Abraham, and David (Matthew 1; Luke 3).
- He is the greater Moses (Deuteronomy 18:18).
- He is David's greater son (Isaiah 9:6).
- He is the suffering servant who fulfilled the Messianic passages on suffering (Psalm 22:16 ; Psalm 69:21; Micah 5:1; Isaiah 53:5-6).
- He is God's chosen sacrifice and High Priest (Hebrews 5-9).

The great confession of the church that Jesus is "The Christ" and that He is Lord (Matthew 16:15-18; Romans 10:9, 10).

*"God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord."*  
(Lutheran Confession).

Hebraists assert that the term means "*to set up*" rather than "*to anoint*." He was "*set up*" to be appointed to his offices from eternity. But historically, His anointing took place when He was conceived of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) (Berkoff, 1993, p. 313).

The name *Christos* was originally assigned without the article, but gradually developed into a proper noun. “Christ” is Jesus’ title; His declaration of OT fulfillment of Messianic prophecy. It is good news that Jesus is the Christ, the hope of Israel, the fulfillment of expectation.

### **THE SON OF MAN**

Jesus employed the title *Son of Man* for himself. It is used around 80 times in the Gospels. It is never directed to Jesus by his disciples or others; i.e. no one ever addressed Him as “the Son of Man.” The disciples never use the term after the resurrection to refer to Jesus. Jesus used the term to unobtrusively identify His Messianic role. The title, “*Son of Man*” does not necessarily refer to Christ’s humanity. The title *Son of Man* is an obscure title used by Daniel to refer to a heavenly, transcendent, supernatural Being who would come to earth with apocalyptic glory (Daniel 7:13). The clue to its true meaning can be found in the following passages: (John 3:13, 1:51; Mark 14:62). The title *Son of Man* is used in three ways:

The Son of Man ministering with authority on earth.

*Matthew 9:6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.*

*Matthew 12: 8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.*

*Matthew 13:37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man.*

**The Son of Man in humiliation and death.** See this concept in the “*Bread of Life*” discourse where Jesus gave His flesh (his death) as the means for men to obtain eternal life.

*Matthew 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

*Matthew 17:9 And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.*

*Matthew 17:12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.*

*Matthew 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

**The Son of Man coming in apocalyptic glory** to judge men and inaugurate the kingdom of God.

*Matthew 16:27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.*

*Matthew 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.*

*Matthew 26:64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*

**As the *Son of Man*, Jesus was God’s authority on Earth;** He is *Jacob’s Ladder*, the *Gateway to Heaven* (John 1:51). He is also the *Apocalyptic Judge* -- the One all men will face on the Day of

Judgment (John 5:27; 9:38); the mysterious personage that appeared before the Ancient of Days to receive authority to rule the kingdom of God (Daniel 7:13).

## **THE SON OF GOD**

***John 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.***

The title *Son of God* is used 28 times in the Gospels; 10 times in John; 18 times in Acts through Revelation -- a total of 46 times in the New Testament. The title is uniquely used in John to define a special relation of Christ to His Heavenly Father. *Pater* is used by Jesus of the Father in Matthew 23 times and Mark 4 times, but He speaks of God as His Father 106 times in John. He uses the term “my Father” 24 times in the 4th Gospel. In the Synoptics it is used in the latter half of His ministry. John writes his gospel so that men might know that Jesus is the Christ, but more than that: He is the Son of God (John 20:31) (Ladd, 1974, p. 247ff).

The title “*Son*” implies deity: John declares in his prologue that *Logos is Theos* and reference His incarnation in verse 14. They beheld His glory, the glory of the only Son of God. The phrase, *monogenh.j* *qeo.j*, *monogenes theos*, according to the best text is best translated “the only God” (Ladd, p. 247). Robertson agrees. The “*only theos*” in the flesh has declared “theos” (John 1:14; 5:27; 9:38) (Robertson, 1932).

The title “*Son*” implies that Jesus is *the unique Son of God*: The translation “*only begotten*” comes from *genos*, meaning “kind” or “sort,” not *gennao*, which means “to beget” (1 John 5:18). It is, therefore, not accurately translated in the KJV. The correct reading is *monogenes theos (God only begotten)*. The idea behind *genos* is that Jesus is of “one class” or “one sort” or “one kind” or “one and only” and that He is one in like kind with the Father; i.e. of the same substance. Luke discusses the widow’s only son and uses the term *monogenh.j* to impress upon us her plight. Her one and only natural son just died (Luke 7:12). While others may become “sons of God” through adoption (John 1:12, 13), Jesus is the unique Son being of the same substance of His Father — that substance being spirit (*pneu/ma o` qeo.j* - John 4:24).

The author of Hebrews employs the phrase “*impress of the substance of Him*” (*carakth.r th/j u`posta,sewj auvtou*) implying that Jesus is one in substance, of the same foundation, made up of the same “stuff” of which God is made. But, it does **not** imply that He one in personality with the Father. He is the special Object of the Father’s love but remains separate from His personality (John 5:20; 10:17). His words are the words of God (John 8:26, 28, 40). His knowledge of God is exclusive and authoritative (John 6:47; Matthew 11:27). His honor due is that equal to the Father (John 5:21ff). To hear Jesus, is to hear God; To see Jesus, is to see God; to believe in Jesus, is to believe in God and to disbelieve Jesus is to disbelieve God (John 12: 44-48). But, Jesus and the Father are maintained throughout Scripture as *two distinct Beings* made up of the same spirit substance.

*As the Son*, His mission was to impart life. He has life in Himself and He imparts eternal life to those who believe (John 5:21; 5:26; 3:35), the beginning of a relationship was in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18); He also came to execute judgment (John 5:22-23) and to redeem men (John 1:29; 10:18; 12:24).

## **JESUS**



“*Jesus*” is the English pronunciation of our Lord’s Greek name (Vlhsou/). It is pronounced in Greek as “*heysue*.” It is used 942 times in the NT. Men did not give Christ the name *Jesus*. His Greek name was given to him by God the Father (Matthew 1:21). This is the Greek form of the Hebrew word (׃vuäAhy> or *Jehoshua* or *Yeshua* (Joshua. 1:1; Zechariah 3:1). The root word of *Jehoshua* means “to save.” Jesus is the Savior. It was a common name and is pronounced *Yeshua* by some in America. It was never used alone after His resurrection and is always connected with “Christ” or “Lord.” His proper title today is “The Lord Jesus Christ” or kuri,ou Vlhsou/ Cristou/ (Philippians 1:2).

It has become trendy in some circles to call Jesus “*Yeshua*” today. Though it is not wrong to do so, let us remember that the NT saints called him by his Greek name, kuri,ou Vlhsou/ Cristou/, “the Lord Jesus Christ,” and **not** His Hebrew name, “*Yeshua*.” There is a trend among these groups to usurp the authority of the Old Testament above the New, instead of properly asserting the New Testament as the authority of the Old. Many of these groups are putting themselves back under the cultic codes of Israel.

### **KING OF ISRAEL**

***Matthew 2:1-2 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.***

***John 1:49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.***

The world, of course, does not acknowledge Jesus as King . . . and therefore has rejected His law. The Jews, then and now, do not accept the fact that Jesus is King of Israel: “*We will not have this man to reign over us*” (Luke 19:14). Many Christians, especially in the dispensational camp, are uncomfortable with calling Jesus, “*King*.” These believers assert that it is inappropriate to call Jesus “*King of Israel*” because they believe this title is reserved for the supposed millennial period in the future where Jesus will supposedly rule the nation of geo-political Israel on earth.

*The phrase “king of kings” is used in Scripture six times. Once, the title is applied to God the Father (1 Timothy 6:11), and twice to the Lord Jesus (Revelation 17:14; 19:16). The other three (Ezra 7:12; Ezekiel 26:7; Daniel 2:37) refer to either Artaxerxes or Nebuchadnezzar, kings who used the phrase to express their absolute sovereignty over their respective realms (Persia and Babylon). The phrase “lord of lords” is used in Scripture five times, and only referring to God (Deuteronomy 10:17; Psalm 136:3; 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14; 19:16). Used together, the two phrases refer only to the Lord Jesus Christ . . .*

*Fundamentally, the idea of Jesus being King of kings and Lord of lords means that there is no higher authority. His reign over all things is absolute and inviolable. God raised Him from the dead and placed Him over all things, “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:21-23). (Gotquestions.org. CEO S. Michael Huddman)*

The Revolutionary Americans cried, “***No King but Jesus***.” It was this title “***King Jesus***” that united the Colonies and inspired courage to establish a new nation (Marshall & Manual, 1977, p. 254). But, it was

the Scottish Covenanters who paid the price for calling Jesus “King.” Rejecting the doctrine of the “Divine Right of Kings” along with the attempt of James VI to force Anglicanism down their throats, blood flowed in the hills of the Scots. Inspired by the Covenanters, early Americans proclaimed “No king, but King Jesus.” The Spirit announced unashamedly,

*John 12:15 Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.*

*Revelation 17:24 These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.*

*Revelation 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

The Magi looked for Jesus, *the king of Israel* (Matthew 2:1-2). The title “*King of Israel*” does not appear to be a title that Jesus received during his ministry, but it does appear that the general populace considered Jesus to be the King of Israel. In reference to Jesus’ triumphal entry, the Spirit assigned the title “*king*” to Jesus (Matthew 21:5; Zechariah 9:9).

Nathanael associate the term “*Son of God*” with Jesus being the “*King of Israel*.” Jesus’ accusers connected the term “King of Israel” with the “Christ” as a ruler of Israel (Luke 23:2). Pilate asked Jesus if he was the “*King of Israel*,” but Jesus answered his question with a question and then used it to instruct Pilate that his *kingdom was not of this world* (John 18:33ff). The crowd mocked Jesus calling Him “*King*” (John 19:3). When Pilate tried to release Jesus, he presented him as “*King*” to the riotous crowd, but crowd hypocritically stated, “*We have no king but Caesar*” (John 19:15) – a violation of Exodus 23:1-3. The doctrine that “*turned the world upside down*” was the message *the Lord Jesus Christ was a King greater than Caesar* (Acts 17:5-7).

The gospel was born in a world of emperor worship. In fact, Rome taught that Caesar was a god and that there was no salvation in any other save Caesar. When Peter preached, “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,*” he declared war on Rome (Acts 4:12).

The term “*King*” was applied to Jesus in Paul’s proclamation of the kingdom gospel, or at least, we can deduce that Paul called Jesus “*King*” (Acts 17:6-7). And, it was the preaching of King Jesus that incited the riot. But it does not appear to be a majority title that Paul was seeking to communicate. Possibly, Paul played down the kingship of Jesus in order not to incite the hostility of the Romans who were loyal to Caesar. Paul did not hesitate, however, to refer to *Jesus as King* to his disciple Timothy (1 Timothy 1:17; 6:15; Acts 17:6-7). In fact, in Paul’s accolades of praise, he used the title “*King of kings, and Lord of lords*” to inspire Timothy and to provoke loyal service to the gospel.

In Revelation, John sees the Lamb obtaining victory over the beast because He is “*Lord of lords, and King of kings*” and clearly ascribes to Him the title (Revelation 17:14; 19:16). YHWH was called “*King of the Nations*” (Jeremiah 10:7), and the title is applied to Christ (Revelation 15:3-4). He is declared to be Lord and He should be my Lord; Lord of my family; Lord of my church; and, Lord of the United States of America.

The implication of Jesus being *King of the Nations* is profound because He claims jurisdiction over every nation; that is, if Jesus is indeed *King of the Nations*, then His bondservants have the authority to call kings, presidents, and rulers to obey His Word.

The issue, then, is not whether Jesus is King of the Nations, but will men acknowledge him as such. In *ACLU et.al. v. Judge Roy Moore, a.k.a. the Ten Commandments Case 2002*, this issue surfaced in federal court. When Judge Myron Thompson, federal judge, understood that the real issue was not the presence of the Ten Commandments' monument in the foyer of the Alabama Supreme Court, but that its presence was there to remind the state *that it was accountable to the King of the Nation and His Law-word*, Judge Thompson would have **none** of it. No tyrant would (*Glassroth v. Moore and Maddox et al. v. Moore*).

In conclusion, Jesus is the *King of Israel*, but He never presented Himself as such to the nation. His ministry on earth was primarily redemptive, and secondarily political. Jesus was promised the throne of Israel (Luke 1:32). But He did not receive this authority until his exaltation. In His ascension, Jesus is exalted to the right hand of God and is viewed as sitting on the throne of God (Acts 2:30-36; Hebrews 1:8; 8:3; 12:2; Revelation 3:21; 5:1-7; 7:17; 22:1). In these verses, the throne of God and throne of the Lamb are synonymous and are indistinguishable. The throne of David appears to be transferred to heaven in Acts two; that is, the fulfillment was greater than the promise. Consequently, the title King of Israel appears to be merged and absorbed into the greater title, "*King of kings, and Lord of lords*." The title "*King*" was not used of Jesus readily in the Book of Acts, not because Jesus was not King, but in order not to incite riot. The title "**King Jesus**," however, was used during the Colonial Period of American History, not only to incite riot, but to inspire obedience by the Colonists to principles higher than human authority. From this settled conviction, Francis Scott Key wrote "ant this be our motto, 'In God is our trust'" (Star Spangle Banner). It appears to me, in a day an age where men idolize the state and make government a god, we need to revive the title, "*No King but Jesus*."

## **LAMB OF GOD**

The title "*Lamb of God*" was not a title preached by Jesus about himself, nor was it a label used by the Apostles in their preaching in Acts. John the Baptist assigned this caption to Christ (John 1:19), and John the Apostle used this inscription to describe Christ in heaven. This title is exclusive to John. "*Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world . . .*" and it is a title that only Christians can fully appreciate. The title refers to the purpose of Jesus coming to earth. It describes His work as Redeemer, the lamb-substitute for sinners (Revelation 7:14). Furthermore, it is a reminder that the meek Jesus-Lamb will be the mighty General Who will conquer the world and bring it into subjection to the will of the Father in kingdom consummation (Revelation 5:1ff; 1 Corinthians 15:24).

The title "*Lamb of God*" has a history and it is a statement of sufficiency. There was a lamb sufficient to cover the sins of a **single man** (Genesis 4); a lamb sufficient to save a **family** from death (Exodus 12); a lamb sufficient to cover the sins of a **nation** (Leviticus 16); and, the Lamb who is sufficient to take away the sins of the **world** (John 1:19).

The title "*Lamb of God*" inspires the character of Christian ministry. It spurs sacrificial service and a bold witness for the gospel (Revelation 12:11). Unlike the Muslims, the Christian does not take up arms to threaten and win converts. The title is a reminder that in our witness to the world the Gladiator Gospel is proclaimed by God's attack lambs, that is, our witness is not only to be bold and persuasive but gentle and harmless (Revelation 5:1-7; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:4; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23; 22:1, 3).

## MEDIATOR OF THE NEW COVENANT

**Hebrews 8:6** “. . . he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.”

**Hebrews 9:15** “And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament . . .”

The term “*Mediator of a new covenant*” is a term shrouded with mystery. While the Bible is divided into two Testaments, theologians are not on agreement on what the “*covenant*” means or how it applies to Christians. The world does not recognize covenants between God and men. **Modern religious Jews** still seek to order their life in some way under the Mosaic Covenant and do not recognize the inauguration of a new covenant under Jesus. **Messianic Christians** recognize the fulfillment of the new covenant in Christ, but tend to merge the Mosaic demands with New Testament responsibilities. **Reformed theologians** tend to organize covenant constructs into a Covenant of Works and a Covenant of Grace (Reymond, 1998). **Classical Dispensationalists** believe it “remains . . . to ‘prove’ that what has been provided by Christ’s death and resurrection is actually realized/operational and experienced by the church today” (Willis & Master, 1994). **Dispensationalists** tend to see the New Covenant in Jeremiah extended and applied to the church in some form.

The term “*mediator*” (mesi,thj, mesitas) means *mediator, negotiator, or arbitrator*. It implies being a “middle man” (**me,soj** meaning “middle.”) in a dispute or contract. In Hebrews 8:6 Jesus is said to be a “*mediator of a superior covenant.*” The word “*mediator*” is in the nominative and the adjective “superior” is in the emphatic position indicating the superiority of the covenant in which Jesus mediates. The context is obviously the Old Covenant verses the New Covenant of Jeremiah. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Jesus is the One who has installed and secured the New Covenant of Jeremiah. Bruce Wares in his contribution to Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church, *The New Covenant and the People(s) of God*, argues that *if* Jesus paid for man’s sins (the basis of a changed relationship), and the Holy Spirit has come to change men’s hearts (internalization of the law), *then* the fruits of the New Covenant are now in effect (p. 68-97)! Wares’ argument is difficult to resist (Wares, 1992).

Like all covenants, there must be *an offer and acceptance*. In the New Testament, God offers men eternal life, justification, and forgiveness if they will believe and accept the offer. Jesus is the substance, the ground upon which men can find a meeting place with God.

**Hebrews 8:22**, “*Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.*”

The word “*guarantee*” (e;gguo; egguos) is an adjective used as a substantive indicating that Jesus is the “grantor” or “pledge” or “surety” or “sponsor” of the new Covenant. From this text, we can deduct that Jesus has been sworn in by an oath as a priestly Mediator between God and man. Jesus is not only *God’s means* through Whom He can dispense the blessings sought under the Old Covenant because of Christ’s obedience to God’s law, Jesus is *our means* of fulfilling the obligations of the Old Covenant to God because of His obedience to the Law as our Representative. It is through the “*Middle Man*” that our obligations to righteousness have been secured, and it is to and through the “*Middle Man*” that God has poured out the blessings sought under the Old Covenant. Because Jesus has removed sins that offended God and obeyed God’s law on man’s behalf, the blessings of the New Covenant are now in effect for the elect.

## CHRIST, THE ONE MEDIATOR

***1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;***

In modern times the media is beating the drum that all religions are equal (omnism) and that choosing a religion is no different than choosing between #5 Happy Meal at McDonalds or Go-Go Burger special at Big Bob's BBQ. But this is **not** the teaching of Scripture. The text tells us there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. The way to Heaven is narrow. So much so no man can find God apart from His Son who is called "*one mediator*" in our text. Let us consider the implications of this verse.

**Christ is a Mediator.** The word "*mediator*" comes from the Greek word "*mesos*" which means middle man, arbitrator, negotiator, or advocate. It refers to one who stands between to exchange decrees and obligations. *Christ is the Bridge* in the canyon between God and man.

**Christ is the only mediator.** The adjective "*one*" (*eis*) is used twice in this Scripture and both are in the emphatic position narrowing the existence of God to the Christian God and the concept of a mediator to Christ alone. Salvation is in a Person, **not** a system or religion. Furthermore, Christ is uniquely qualified to be the only Mediator between God and man. Christians have believed since the earliest times Jesus Christ had two distinct natures in union but "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation;" that is, He is the God man having both the nature of God and the nature of man. This being so, he is properly qualified as the "*Mediator*" between God and man.

**Christ mediates the blessings of God to man.** When Simeon saw Jesus as a new born, he declared, "*My eyes have seen Thy Salvation.*" Salvation is not in religion or corporation or system. It is in a Person—a human being—Christ, the God-man. He is *God's Representative* (Mediator), the means or locus of kingdom blessings promised to men by God if they obeyed Him. But, Jesus also mediates the concerns of man to God; that is, *He is our Representative*.

**Modern man**, however, seeks to bring peace on earth and good will to men **not** by Jesus Christ, *but by acts of the state and enactment of codes and statutes.*

**Christ mediates the concerns of men to God.** In the Biblical view, man is a creature and is by nature distinct from God. Moreover, man is a sinner. Man, then, could only approach God by grace. **No** man can approach God on his own terms. He needs an Advocate. This text informs us that God's designated Mediator is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Apart from Him no man can achieve a standing in His presence. Unlike sinners who fall short of obedience to God, Christ fulfilled the law. *As man's Representative he obeyed God's law for men;* i.e. He accomplished the sinner's obligations to God. In his life, He is **the believer's Representative** Who fulfilled man's legal responsibilities to God. For this reason we can say we are saved by works -- by the doing and dying of Christ.

**The hypostatic union** of the two natures of Christ demolishes any man-made faith-claims that man can become a god. The doctrine of Christ destroyed centuries of beliefs germane to Hellenistic man, the unity of all being, sometimes called the "*great chain of being.*" This was the idea that man was different from deity only by degree, **not** by nature. Thus, in Hellenic thought, a man could be a god; man's potential was unlimited. Thus, the Caesars saw themselves as gods with power to decree and deserving of worship. *Christ's mediation* meant freedom from all man's claims to divinity. The whole view, "*As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be*" (LDS) is heresy plain and simple.

**Christ's mediation negates any claim that man-made institutions can mediate between God and man.** The gulf between God and people is bridged only by the incarnate God-man, Jesus Christ. Scripture denies to any human agency the power of salvation whether that agency comes in the form of popes or kings. It is denied it to the state and the church. No human being or institution can claim to link heaven and earth. And on this objection, **the Reformation** was born: *absolution was in Christ not the popes.*

**Christ's mediation sets men free because it limits all human power.** It places limits on the State in that it denies the State a means of mediation to God. All ancient civilizations practiced a form of statism wherein kings claimed some kind of mediation between gods and the underworld. The Egyptians believed their pharaoh to be the mediator between the gods and the world of men. After death the pharaoh became divine, identified with Osiris, the father of Horus, god of the dead. He passed on his sacred powers and position to the new pharaoh, his son. The pharaoh's divine status was portrayed in metaphorical terms: his uraeus (the snake on his crown) spit flames of poison at his enemies; he was able to route thousands of his adversaries on the battlefield. He was all-powerful, knowing everything and controlling nature and fertility. His decrees were divine. To disobey pharaoh was to disobey God.

**Christ's mediation meant freedom from the claims of the divine state,** the god-kings and the priest-kings that controlled every ancient culture. Christ offered men the opportunity to enter the kingdom of God. Men entered into it by recognizing the authority of Christ ("*The Lord reigns*" – Psalm 97) and surrendering to Him as Lord. This, meant of course, the believer had to renounce the belief that Caesar was a god. Caesar was **not** a god **nor** a mediator to God. gods decree, but Caesar's decrees were not divine nor were they sanctioned by the true Lawgiver. While laws reflect morality, rarely do they reflect Biblical morality. Acts of the State are **not** a means of expanding the kingdom of God on earth; and, at times demand resistance, **not** obedience.

**Christ as Mediator meant that governments had a limited role in this life.** A government that seeks *to become all things to all men* exceeds the limits of its authority. The view that governments were not divine and limited led to the **Magna Carta** (Latin: Great Charter), and the **English Puritan Revolution**; and, ultimately, to **the American Republic**. The Magna Carta limited the King's men from making arrests for commercial purposes without a common law probable cause, without citizen witnesses, and repudiated the whole sham of exempting government officials from obedience to law. Even the king had to obey his own law. *The mediation of Christ became the theological foundation of Western liberty* because it meant *Sovereignty was in Christ and not the god-state*. To the extent we lose sight of the unique role of Christ, we continue to lose our liberties—for we are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights. Humanism is the elevation of man and always leads to a tyrannical state.

Because Christ is the Mediator between God and man and proclaimed the kingdom of God, kingdom order becomes the rule of life for the man, his family, his church, and his nation. When the Lord Jesus admonished men to pray, "*Thy kingdom come*," he requires men to recognize the rule of God and surrender to it; that is, men and their institutions need to confess the rule of Christ. Because He is the only Mediator between God and man, men would do well to "*hear the Son*."

**THE ARCHE AND TELOS** (Romans 10:4; Revelation 22:13):

In Revelation 22:13, our Lord calls Himself *the Beginning and the End (telos)*. Paul calls Him the "end (*telos*) of the law.

***Romans 10:4 Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.***

**Q:** What is meant by the phrase "Christ is the end of the law?"

The word "*end*" is a translation of the Greek word "*telos*."

Aristotle describes the meaning of the word *telos*.

*"The word telos means something like purpose, or goal, or final end. According to Aristotle, everything has a purpose or final end. If we want to understand what something is, it must be understood in terms of that end, which we can discover through careful study. It is perhaps easiest to understand what a telos is by looking first at objects created by human beings. Consider a knife.*

*If you wanted to describe a knife, you would talk about its size, and its shape, and what it is made out of, among other things. But Aristotle believes that you would also, as part of your description, have to say that it is made to cut things. And when you did, you would be describing its telos. The knife's purpose, or reason for existing, is to cut things. And Aristotle would say that unless you included that telos in your description, you wouldn't really have described – or understood – the knife. This is true not only of things made by humans, but of plants and animals as well. If you were to fully describe an acorn, you would include in your description that it will become an oak tree in the natural course of things – so acorns too have a telos. Suppose you were to describe an animal, like a thoroughbred foal. You would talk about its size, say it has four legs and hair, and a tail. Eventually you would say that it is meant to run fast. This is the horse's telos, or purpose. If nothing thwarts that purpose, the young horse will indeed become a fast runner.*

*Here we are not primarily concerned with the telos of a knife or an acorn or a foal. What concerns us is the telos of a human being. Just like everything else that is alive, human beings have a telos. What is it that human beings are meant by nature to become in the way that knives are meant to cut, acorns are meant to become oak trees, and thoroughbred ponies are meant to become race horses? According to Aristotle, we are meant to become happy. This is nice to hear, although it isn't all that useful. After all, people find happiness in many different ways. However, Aristotle says that living happily requires living a life of virtue. Someone who is not living a life that is virtuous, or morally good, is also not living a happy life, no matter what they might think. They are like a knife that will not cut, an oak tree that is diseased and stunted, or a racehorse that cannot run. In fact they are worse, since they have chosen the life they lead in a way that a knife or an acorn or a horse cannot." (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy)*

Thus, we can conclude that **the law is the objective standard of righteousness . . . that Christ is the subjective manifestation of the law of God . . . the fulfillment of the law . . . the perfect model and standard of the law . . . that the law describes the virtue of Christ . . . that He is the living Torah . . . that He perfectly obeyed the law enabling God to credit His righteousness to those who believe (Romans 4).**

Further, Aristotle said the *telos of politics* was "*happiness*" of the people (polis). But, to the Christian, the *telos* is the *glory of God and our happiness -- the enjoyment of Him forever.*

The Book of Revelation ends with Christ calling Himself the **Alpha and Omega**, the **Aleph and the Tav**, the **Beginning and the End**, the **Arche and the Telos**.

***Revelation 22:13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning (protos) and the end (eschatos), the first (arche) and the last (telos).***

### **MAJESTIC APPELLATIONS**

**The Icon of God:** In Colossians 1:15, our Lord is called the “*image of the invisible God*,” the “*icon*” of God. He is the visible manifestation of the invisible God; the unveiling of Theos; the *Knowable* about the Unknowable; the Seen Presence of the unseen essence; the temporal, historical Visitation of the Eternal Existent One.

He is the “*icon*”; i.e. in the likeness and pattern of God; the Only Prototype of Deity; of the same substance as the Eternal One; having the same attributes and qualities of the Almighty. Men cannot see the invisible God, but in Christ’s appearance on earth, men saw Jesus; and in seeing Jesus, men saw the Eternal One in the corpus of Christ. Thus, Paul informs us “in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead (theotatos) bodily” (Colossians 2:9). He is **not** of deity or of God or just sent by God, but very God of God. He is not the fullness of God, but He is fully God—the accurate representation of His eternal transient and intransient attributes.

Hebrews says the Son is the “*express image*” or exact, precise, accurate, real manifestation of God to men. This can be said of no other man. The whole idea that we (mankind) are every much God as Jesus is utter blasphemy—so close to the fruit of the poisonous tree you can hear the hissing snake.

**The Firstborn of all Creation** (Colossians 1:15) By “*Firstborn*” Paul is not seeking to communicate that Jesus was the first being ever created. Jesus is uncreated; i.e. He has always existed and is “goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2). As “*firstborn*,” Paul communicates the primacy and priority of the Son above all other beings (See Exodus 4:22).

**Head of the Church** (Colossians 1:17-18). In calling Jesus *the Head of the Church* Paul is communicating His importance; that is, He is “*supreme, premier and fundamental, above, exceptional, choice, premium, and the One in Absolute Authority over His people.*”

Every command comes from the Head. The body is totally dependent on its head. The Head must be honored and obeyed. Christ is the Head of the Church, **not** the IRS; **not** the government; **not** a civil ruler; **not** a pope; **not** elders or deacons; **not** a pastor; **not** a man. And, the Colossian Church was rebuked for “**not** holding the head” by giving primacy to man-made decrees (Colossians 2:19-20). Furthermore, He is not only *the Head of the Church*, He is Head over “*all rule and authority*” (Colossians 2:10) inferring that all men and all of man’s institutions are required to organize themselves around His authority and His law-order.

In conclusion, Jesus has many names and titles. Not all are mentioned here. Each name and title reveals the station, character, and attributes of the Savior. To know His name is to know Him.

### **OTHER NAMES AND TITLES OF CHRIST**

Abraham’s Seed (Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:16).

Advocate (1 John 2:1).

Almighty (Revelation 1:8).

Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:8; 22:13).

Amen (Revelation 3:14).



## PILLAR ONE: THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Angel (Genesis 48:16; Exodus 23:20,21).  
Angel of God's presence (Isaiah 63:9).  
Angel of the Lord (Exodus 3:2; Judges 13:15-22).  
Apostle (Hebrews 3:1).  
Arm of the Lord (Isaiah 51:9; 53:1).  
Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).  
Author of eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:9).  
Beginning of the creation of God (Revelation 3:14).  
Beloved (Ephesians 1:6).  
Beloved Son (Matthew 12:18).  
Blessed and only Potentate (1 Timothy 6:15).  
Branch (Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12).  
Bread of Life (John 6:35, 48).  
Bridegroom (Matthew 9:15).  
Bright and Morning Star (Revelation 22:16).  
Captain of Salvation (Hebrews 2:10).  
Captain of the Lord's hosts (Joshua 5:14-15).  
Carpenter (Mark 6:3).  
Carpenter's Son (Matthew 13:55).  
Chief Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:6).  
Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4).  
Christ (Matthew 16:20; Mark 14:16; Luke 23:2).  
Christ Jesus (Acts 19:4; Romans 3:24; 8:1; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1:30).  
Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:39; 1 Timothy 1:12).  
Christ of God (Luke 9:20).  
Christ the Lord (Luke 2:11).  
Commander (Isaiah 55:4).  
Consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25).  
Cornerstone (Matthew 21:42; Ephesians 2:20).  
Counselor (Isaiah 9:6).  
Creator (John 1:3).  
David (Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:23).  
Dayspring (Luke 1:78).  
Deliverer (Romans 11:26).  
Desire of all nations (Haggai 2:7).  
Door (John 10:7).  
Elect of God (Isaiah 42:1).  
Eternal life (1 John 1:2; 5:20).  
Everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6).  
Faithful and True (Revelation 19:11).  
Faithful witness (Revelation 1:5; 3:14).  
First and Last (Revelation 1:17; 2:8).  
Firstborn (Psalm 89:27; Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 1:5).  
Forerunner (Hebrews 6:20).  
Fountain (Zechariah 13:1).  
Glory of the Lord (Isaiah 40:5).

## PILLAR ONE: THE PERSON OF CHRIST

God (Isaiah 40:9; John 20:28).  
God blessed forever (Romans 9:5).  
God's fellow (Zechariah 13:7).  
Good Shepherd (John 10:14).  
Governor (Matthew 2:6).  
Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14).  
Head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18).  
Heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2).  
High Priest (Hebrews 4:14).  
Holy Child (Acts 4:27).  
Holy One (Psalm 16:10, with Acts 2:27; 3:14).  
Holy One of God (Mark 1:24).  
Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 41:14; 54:5).  
Horn of salvation (Luke 1:69).  
I AM, (Exodus 3:14, with John 8:58).  
Image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4).  
Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23).  
Jesus (Matthew 1:21; 1 Thessalonians 1:10).  
Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1).  
Jesus of Nazareth (Matthew 21:11; Mark 1:24; Luke 24:19).  
Judge (Acts 10:42; 2 Timothy 4:8).  
Judge of Israel (Micah 5:1).  
Just One (Acts 7:52; 22:14).  
King (Zechariah 9:9, with Matthew 21:5).  
King of Glory (Psalm 24:7-10).  
King of Israel (John 1:49).  
King of Kings (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14).  
King of peace (Hebrews 7:2).  
King of righteousness (Hebrews 7:2).  
King of Saints (Revelation 15:3).  
King of Salem (Hebrews 7:1).  
King of the Jews (Matthew 2:2; 27:37; John 19:19).  
King of Zion (Matthew 21:25).  
Lamb (Revelation 5:6, 12; 13:8; 21:22; 22:3).  
Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36).  
Lawgiver (Isaiah 33:22).  
Leader (Isaiah 55:4).  
Life (John 14:6; Colossians 3:4; 1 John 1:2).  
Light of the world (John 1:8; 8:12).  
Lily of the valleys (Song of Solomon 2:1).  
Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5).  
Living Bread (John 6:51).  
Living Stone (1 Peter 2:4).  
Lord and Savior (2 Peter 1:11; 3:18).  
Lord Christ (Colossians 3:24).  
Lord God Almighty (Revelation 15:3).

Lord God of the holy prophets (Revelation 22:6).  
Lord Jesus (Acts 7:59; Colossians 3:17).  
Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 11:17; 16:31; 20:21).  
Lord of all (Acts 10:36).  
Lord of glory (1 Corinthians 2:8; James 2:1).  
Lord of Hosts (Isaiah 44:6).  
Lord of Lords (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14; 19:16).  
Lord our righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6; 33:16).  
Man of Sorrows (Isaiah 53:3).  
Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5).  
Messenger of the covenant (Malachi 3:1).  
Messiah (Daniel 9:25; John 1:41).  
Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6).  
Mighty One of Israel (Isaiah 30:29).  
Mighty One of Jacob (Isaiah 49:26; 60:16).  
Morningstar (Revelation 22:16; 2 Peter 1:19).  
Most Holy (Daniel 9:24).  
Nazarene (Matthew 2:23).  
Offspring of David (Revelation 22:16).  
Only Begotten Son (John 1:18).  
Only Begotten (John 1:14).  
Our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7).  
Potentate (1 Timothy 6:15).  
Power of God (1 Corinthians 1:24).  
Prince (Acts 5:31).  
Prince of life (Acts 3:15).  
Prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6).  
Prince of the kings of the earth (Revelation 1:5).  
Prophet (Matthew 21:11; Luke 24:19; John 7:40).  
Rabbi (John 1:49).  
Rabboni (John 20:16).  
Ransom (1 Timothy 2:6).  
Redeemer (Job 19:25; Isaiah 59:20; Isaiah 60:16).  
Resurrection and life (John 11:25).  
Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4).  
Rock of Offence (1 Peter 2:8).  
Root of David (Revelation 5:5; 22:16).  
Root of Jesse (Isaiah 11:10).  
Rose of Sharon (Song of Solomon 2:1).  
Ruler of Israel (Micah 5:2).  
Savior (Luke 2:11; 2 Peter 2:20; 3:18).  
Savior of the Body (Ephesians 5:23).  
Sceptre (Numbers 24:17).  
Second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45).  
Second Man (1 Corinthians 15:47).  
Seed of David (2 Timothy 2:8).

Seed of woman (Genesis 3:15).  
Servant (Isaiah 42:1; 52:13; 53:11; Acts 4:30).  
Servant of Rulers (Isaiah 49:7).  
Shepherd (Mark 14:27).  
Shepherd and Overseer of Souls (1 Peter 2:25).  
Shepherd of Israel (Psalm 80:1).  
Shiloh (Genesis 49:10).  
Son of David (Matthew 9:27).  
Son of God (Luke 1:35; John 1:49).  
Son of Joseph (John 6:42).  
Son of man (John 5:27).  
Son of the Blessed (Mark 14:61).  
Son of the Father (2 John 1:3).  
Son of the Highest (Luke 1:32).  
Star (Numbers 24:17).  
Stone of Stumbling (1 Peter 2:8).  
Sun of righteousness (Malachi 4:2).  
Sure Foundation (Isaiah 28:16).  
Surety (Hebrews 7:22).  
Teacher (Matthew 23:8; John 3:2).  
Tender Plant (Isaiah 53:2).  
True God (1 John 5:20).  
True Light (John 1:9).  
True Vine (John 15:1).  
Truth (John 14:6).  
Vine (John 15:1).  
Way (John 14:6).  
Wisdom (Proverbs 8:12).  
Wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24).  
Witness (Isaiah 55:4; Revelation 1:5).  
Wonderful (Isaiah 9:6).  
Word (John 1:1; 1 John 5:7).  
Word of God (Revelation 19:13).  
Word of Life (1 John 1:1).

## **PRECIOUS JESUS**

***1 Peter 2:4 . . . rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God***

Men are in search of precious stones and prized commodities. Before us stands something more valuable than fine wine and precious jewels -- a living stone, the Son of God. Christians call Him precious Jesus. While He is rejected of men, He is cherished by God and by us.

**His name is precious.** *Jesus* is the sweetest name I know. It means “*Savior*.” “*He came to save his people from their sins*.” He does not assist or help men to be saved. He saves! Who can break the power of sins’ chains? Precious Jesus.

*There is something about the name Jesus  
Something about the name Jesus.  
It is the sweetest name I know  
Oh how I love the name Jesus, Oh how I love the name Jesus  
It is the sweetest name I know.*

**His nature is precious.** He is *the God-man*. Men have believed since the earliest times Jesus Christ had two distinct natures in union but “*without confusion, without change, without division, without separation;*” that is, He is the God-man having both the nature of God and the nature of man. He is the unique Son of God, fully God, but fully man.

**His character is precious.** All the virtues of justice and grace, righteousness and love, masculinity and femininity coalesce in Him. He is tough and tender; strict but just; loving but not permissive; holy, but not aloof. He has no outstanding virtue because all virtue resides in Him in perfect balance and harmony.

**His position is precious.** Three offices existed in Israel and it was a privilege to be attached to one of them. Jesus holds all three offices: *prophet, priest, king*. Being exalted to the right hand of God means that His administration has been inaugurated and is in effect. He is the Prophet that speaks the Word of God to us; the priest that mediates our concerns to God; the King that rules our lives.

**His relationship to the Father is precious.** He is the unique Son of God without beginning or end—the Ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. The Father said on three occasions, “*This is my beloved Son. Hear ye Him.*” He is the “*root out of dry ground,*” “*the arm of the Lord,*” “*the mighty God*” in human form. He was the one man on earth fully committed to doing the will of God. Obedient unto death, He is the “*bread of God*” (Numbers 28:2), the precious Son in whom the Father is well pleased.

**His accomplishments are precious.** He redeemed humanity and removed the curse all the way back to Adam. In his life he kept the law; and, in his death, he met the claims of Divine holiness. There is no sin so bad or stain so deep He cannot cleanse. He saves the chief of sinners and makes the sinner as white as snow. Death is an enemy! Man’s desire for life is not found in science or medicine, but in the gospel. In His resurrection, He triumphed over death to shower the hope of eternal life upon believing men.

But, not everyone feels that that Jesus is precious. When our Lord stood before Herod, the soldiers esteemed Him as “*nought.*”

*Luke 23:11 And Herod with his men of war set him at **nought**, and mocked him,*

To the politicians of that day, Jesus was nothing, a zero, a blank in history. Think of it! The Creator, the Architect of the universe, the King of Israel, the Son of God in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge was standing before them in their warped opinion, Christ’s value was considered less than dust on a scale. To them, He is the *Stone of Stumbling* and a *Rock of Offence* (1 Peter 2:8).

But, to us He is precious Jesus, our Lord and Savior, the Lamb of God, a precious cornerstone in who are all the excellences of Divinity reside, the just One, the Shepherd of our souls, the Chief Shepherd to whom dominion and glory belong forever

## **THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST**

**J. Oswald Sanders** tells the story of Charles Lamb who was with some friends fantasizing about how they would react if a famous personage from the past were to appear in their presence. “And if Christ entered the room?” queried one. The following insight was offered: “You see if Shakespeare entered we should all rise; if He appeared, we must kneel” (Sanders, 1971, p. 11).

### **THE MYSTERIOUS RESPONSES**

Some worshiped Him. Others saw Him as a Nazarene, a mere man, the son of Joseph, the carpenter’s son. A few loved Him and were willing to die for Him. His enemies were eager to rid the earth of Him. To them he was a Devil. But, to Thomas He was “Lord” and “God.”

## **8. HIS SYMETRY OF CHARACTER**

- He neither possessed excess or deficiency.
- He had no outstanding strength or virtue.
- He had no apparent weakness.
- He wasn’t known for one attribute.
- He cast no shadows.
- He never asked for forgiveness, but He forgave others.
- He had no vices.
- His strengths never degenerated into weakness.
- He had no deflection.
- He was gentle. Children loved Him. Leaders feared him.
- He was serious, yet never melancholy.
- He spoke of his joy, yet He was a “man of sorrows.”
- He never spoke when He should have been silent.
- He never prevailed at the expense of another.
- He never spoke the truth without love.
- He never loved without truth.
- He had the prudence of a serpent, the simplicity of a dove.

- He possessed the excellences of both sexes.
- He was a man of steel and velvet; of grace and of power.

## **9. HIS UNIQUE LIFE**

- He never owned a business or made one a success.
- He never wrote a book. His only writing was in sand.
- He never owned property.
- He never wrote a song, yet his teachings are known.
- He never spoke a word that needed to be withdrawn.
- He never spoke a word for which He asked apology.
- He never apologized for an action.
- He was never at a loss for words. Yet, he wasn't a talker.
- He exhibited no fear. No pride. No jealousy.
- He never complained.
- He was never late, ruffled, or out of character.
- He confessed no sin. Yet, he invited scrutiny.
- He never asked for a pardon.
- He never became discouraged, anxious, or worried.
- He never broke a commandment.
- He never sought the advice of another.
- He was never defensive. Never rude. Never irritable.
- He never asked or permitted prayer for Himself.

### **SCRIPTURAL ATTESTATIONS OF HIS CHARACTER**

- He is called "Holy Offspring" (Luke 1:35).
- He was without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

- He committed no sin (1 Peter 2:22).
- No one could convict Him of sin (John 8:46).
- His love surpasses knowledge (Ephesians 3: 19).
- He was completely humble.
- He became a servant.
- He was born in the smallest of towns.
- He was born to poor parents.
- He was born in a stable.
- He owned only one valuable cloak.
- He had to borrow a penny for an illustration.
- He died on a cross.
- He even had to borrow a tomb.
- He was meek (Matthew 11:29; 2 Corinthians 10:1).
- He was an incessant worker (John 5:17).
- He was full of grace and virtue (John 2)
- He was full of justice and godly zeal (John 2).
- He was vulnerable, yet at times he would not trust men.

## 10. THE TWO NATURES OF CHRIST

The two natures of Christ remain a deep mystery. The 4<sup>th</sup> century bishops were deeply engaged in wrestling with the nature of Christ. The Alexandrian school deep into allegorical interpretation came into conflict with the Bishops of Antioch who stressed the historicity of Christ. The former augured for the divinity of Christ and the later, the humanity of Christ. The conflict was over how to manage and articulate the divine nature of Christ and human side of our Lord. These were serious debates, and many a bishop was denounced or excommunicated.

He was **a single person, not** two. Yet, He was deity engaged in humanity. At times he exhibited weakness, at other times omnipotence. Yet, He never appeared to have a split personality. The great question is as Lewis and Demarest state: How could deity with all its perfections unite with humanity with



all its limitations in a single integrated person whom we know as Jesus Christ remarked that the nature of Christ is not *theanthropic* (mixture of natures).

**His personality** may be referred to as the God / man, but not his nature. He had a divine nature and a human nature. He was fully God; He was fully man. He did not have a divine-human nature. His nature exhibited a divine quality and a human quality. He was both infinite and finite. Berkoff says we cannot grasp this union, but we try to compare it with the union of the body and soul, the seat of union being in the soul, not the body (Berkoff, 1993; Thiessen, 1979)

**It is personal:** The union of personalities is called *the hypostatic union*. The two natures or substances constitute one, personal subsistence. Hodge says the two natures are united, but not mingled or confounded. He goes on to say that the hypostatic union means that *Christ is but one person*. (Hodge, 1992, p. 357-359)

It included the human and divine qualities and acts. He was the “*Son of the Most High*,” yet they “*crucified the Lord of glory*.”

It includes the constant presence of both humanity and deity. Hodge adds, “*There is no transfer of the attributes of one nature to the other*” (1992, p. 358).

### **NATURE AND PERSONALITY**

**Nature:** “The sum-total of all the essential qualities of a thing that which makes it what it Isaiah A nature is a substance possessed in common with all the essential qualities of such a substance” (Berkhof, 1993, p. 321).

**Personality:** “The term ‘person’ denotes a complete substance endowed with reason, and, consequently, a responsible subject of its own actions.” Personality is not an integral part of a nature. It is the terminus to which it tends (Berkoff, 1993, p. 321).

Berkoff adds the following (1993, p. 322ff):

- There is but one person in the Logos.
- The Logos furnishes the basis of personality.
- The Logos did not adopt a human personality, only a human nature. He was not two persons, but one. But, this person had two natures, human and divine.
- His human nature was completely human; yet, he subsisted as the Son of God.
- The one divine person, who possessed a divine nature from eternity, assumed a human nature, and now has both.

**Sanders** says, “He did not act, sometimes by His human and sometimes by His divine nature only. He acted in all things as a single Person” (Sanders, 1971, p. 89).

What is the Scriptural proof of two natures and one personality of Jesus? Christ never referred to himself as “We” nor did His “I” ever address “Thou” as God does in Genesis 1:26, “Let us make man in our

image . . .” Both natures are represented, but both are united (John 1:14; Romans 8:3; Galatians 4:4; 9:5; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:11-14; 1 John 4:2,3).

Jesus could also speak of his existence being in heaven and on earth at the same time (John 3:13). No other being could say this. Sanders adds, “*This is inexplicable on any other theory than that the two natures were so organically united as to form a single Person*” (Sanders, 1971, p. 89).

The term “*Son of David*” refers to his human ancestry. The term “*Son of God*” refers to His eternal subsistence. The atonement was dependent on Christ being both God and man. A preacher (John Walden) once said, “*Because He was man, He could die for me; Because He was God, He could die enough.*” He was right. In Christ’s death we find “*substitution*” (humanity) as well as “*efficacy*” (divinity). He was willing to help (humanity), and He was able to help (deity). He is the all-sufficient Savior.

The great statesman, **Daniel Webster**, was dining with a company of literary men at a banquet held in his honor when he was asked by a Unitarian minister, “Mr. Webster, can you comprehend how Jesus Christ could be both God and man?” Webster replied,

*“No, Sir, I cannot understand it. . . . and I would be ashamed to acknowledge Him as my Savior if I could comprehend it. He could be no greater than myself, and such is my conviction of accountability to God, my sense of sinfulness before Him, and my knowledge of my own incapacity to recover myself, that I feel I need a superhuman Savior”* (Cited by Sanders, 1971, 1971, p. 87).

### **EFFECTS OF THE UNION OF TWO NATURES IN ONE PERSON**

The divine nature did not undergo any essential change in the incarnation. It remained impassible, incapable of death, free from ignorance, free from temptation. Incarnation was mediate, not “immediate.” The properties of both, the human nature and the divine nature, are now the properties of one person. He can be omniscient, but also limited in knowledge. Berkoff list three results of the incarnation (Berkhof, 1993, p. 324):

- *a communicatio idiomatum*: that the properties of the divine and human natures are the properties of one person.
- *a communicatio apotelesmatum* or *operationum*: that the work of Christ bears a human and divine element.
- *a communicatio charismatum* or *gratiarum*: that His human nature was adorned with divine gifts of glory and grace.

### **THE LUTHERAN AND REFORMED POSITIONS**

The difference between the two lies in the *communicatio idiomatum*.

**The Lutherans** attribute one nature as ascribed to the other nature on the basis of transference so that real unity can be secured. In other words, there has been an infusion of nature, much like the product of a chromosome match when an egg and sperm meet.

**The reformed community** believes that the properties of the divine and human natures are the properties of one person.

## 11. THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

Christ is portrayed in human terms. He has a family, relatives, brothers and sisters. He is the man, Christ Jesus. His human nature links Him with whole human race (Luke 3). It assures us of unfailing understanding and sympathy (Thiessen, 1979, p. 219).

- He has a human ancestry (Luke 3).
- He had a human birth.
- He had human names.
- He had human development (Luke 2:52).
- He has brothers and sisters.
- He spoke of his body (Matthew 26:12) and of his soul (Matthew 26:38).
- He possessed human infirmities. He was thirsty and tired (John 4).
- He hungered (Mark 11:12). He slept (Matthew 8:24).
- He was tempted (Hebrews 4:15).
- He weeps at the grave of Lazarus (John 11:33, 35).
- He needed prayer (Luke 5:16).
- He was called a man.
- He suffered and tasted pain on the cross.
- He died as a man would die on a cross—in agony.

## 12. THE DEITY OF CHRIST

Since **the Council of Chalcedon**, the church has confessed the doctrine of the two natures of Christ (Berkhof, p. 315).

**B.B. Warfield**, Princeton Professor (1887 to 1921), accurately remarks,

*“The deity of Christ rest, not upon ‘proof-texts or passages, nor upon old argument drawn from these, but upon the general face of the whole manifestation of Jesus Christ, and of the whole impression left by him upon the world.’” (Warfield, 1917). Listed below are a few of the reasons believers assert the deity of Christ.*

### **HIS NAMES ASSERT DEITY**

- *Jesus*: The name means “Savior.” Only God can save (Isaiah 43:7).
- *Immanuel*: The name means “God with us.”
- *Christ*: The name implies deity and sonship (Psalm 2; 110).
- *Lord*: The Greek word “Kurios” is a translation for “LORD” (YHWH).
- *Son of Man*: Daniel’s Son of Man is definitely heavenly.
- *Son of God*: implies “of the same substance” as God.

### **JESUS’ EQUALITY WITH GOD**

#### **His Argument from John 5**

##### **Equal with God**

*But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God (John 5:17-27).*

##### **Equal in Ability**

*Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. (Equal in Ability) (John 5:19).*

##### **Equal in Knowledge**

*For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. (Equal in Knowledge) (John 5:20).*

##### **Equal in Regeneration**

*For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will (John 5:21).*

##### **Equal in Judgment**

*For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son (John 5:22).*

##### **Equal in Honor**

*That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him (John 5:23).*

##### **Equal in Resurrection Power**

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live (John 5:24).*

### **Equal in Self-Existence (Life)**

*For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself (John 5:26).*

### **Equal in Authority**

*And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man (John 5:27).*

### **His Argument from John 14:6**

***Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:6)..***

le,gei aurtw/| îo`Ð Vlhsou/j( VEGw, eivmi h` o`do.j kai. h` avlh,qeia kai. h` zwh,\ ouvdei.j  
e;rcetai pro.j to.n pate,ra eiv mh. diV evmou/Å

Jesus said he came from God; that He was going back to God; that He was the way to God. The words “way,” “truth,” and the “life” are articular nouns indicating something very particular and narrow.

### **His Argument from John 8:56**

***Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am (John 8:56).***

The words “I am” (evgw. eivmi,) is the Greek title for the *Tetragrammaton*. In Exodus 3:2 and 13-15, we see God’s covenant name is “I Am.” It is spelled “YHWH.” In the Middle Ages the German scribes put in vowels and came up with *Jehovah*. The Masoretic scribes left it as it was.

Here is how YHWH looks with vowels: YaHoWaH. In Jewish tradition, the Jews do not pronounce the name in public. As a substitute they use the title “Adonai” which means *Lord*.

English translators used CAPS: “LORD” for YHWH and lower case “Lord” for Adonai.

In the LXX: *Kurios* is substituted for YHWH (Lord for YHWH).

In the Greek speaking Mediterranean world, they spoke of YHWH as *Kurios*.

To a Jew, *YHWH* or *Adonai* or *Kurios* was the only *Elohim* (the general designation for God). To a Canaanite, Baal was *Elohim*. *Kurios* is translated YHWH in the LXX, not *Elohim*.

When Jesus said, “*ego eimi*,” He used the emphatic form “I am!” So identical was the Greek phrase with YHWH that the Jews were going to stone Him for capital blasphemy.

### His Argument from John 10:30-31

*John 10:30-33 I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.*

By this statement, the Jews interpreted it as a claim to deity and were seeking a way to stone Him. Did they come to the correct conclusion? The word “one” is the Greek word “ev.” It is neuter implying that *Christ is one in substance with the Father, and that he is not referring to oneness in personality.* How did the Jews reason?

Major premise: I and the Father are one!

Minor premise: Jesus is one in substance with the Father.

Conclusion: Jesus is Divine.

Major premise: Blasphemers must be stoned to death.

Minor premise: Jesus is a blasphemer

Conclusion: Jesus must be put to death.

The reasoning was logical, but the second minor premise was wrong. They were going to stone him, not for what he did, but for what he said. Later, Jesus said that the Father was greater than He (John 14:28). By this, Jesus was referring to status and position in the Godhead, not attributes and ability. Christology is always subordinate to Theology.

### THE ARGUMENT FROM PAUL

*Colossians 2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

<sup>GNT</sup> *Colossians 2:9 o(ti evn auvtw/ katoikei/ pa/n to. plh,rwma th/j qeo,thtoj swmatikw/j*

Which of us besides a nuclear scientist truly understands the mega tons of power locked in an atom? Split a single atom and there is a nuclear explosion that could level New York City.

Likewise, our text expounds a great truth regarding explosive power compacted in the Savior -- that in Christ dwells all the fullness of Deity. Jesus had a body. Inside that small mass of blood and flesh was the Divine nature, the divine essence. But, our Lord was more than this. The fullness of the Divine nature was in Him. But, there is more: All the fullness of the Divine nature was in him.

The text is **not** telling us that Jesus was like God or that Jesus had a spark of Divinity with him or that He shared a few of God’s transitive attributes. The text is engorged with cosmic power. “*All*,” that is, everything, the whole universe of what God is is in Christ. The whole “lock, stock, and barrel” of the

essence of Deity dwells in bodily form; the “whole shebang” of the nature of the Godhead is in Jesus’ humanity. Christ was totally man, but He was also totally God!<sup>11</sup> To see Me is to see the Father announced the Lord to Philip (John 14:9).

The word “*Godhead*” (*theotatos*) does not refer to Divine attributes as does the term “Godhead” (*Theiotes*) in Romans 1:20. Rather, it refers to the essence of what it means to be God. In Christ dwelt the core, the kernel, the substance of Divinity. God is spirit and that spirit was in Christ. A good man may manifest a Divine attribute like kindness or mercy, but no man can say that in him dwells the *theotatos*, the very essence of the Divine nature. “*In Him was life, and the life was the light of man,*” declared John.

The term “*fullness*” is a naval term referring to a full crew on a ship; that is, a fully equipped vessel. The use of the noun “*fullness*” informs us that Christ was fully God. We sometimes say jokingly about an inept person that they are a few cards short of a full deck or one egg short of a dozen. But, not so with Jesus! Whatever it means to have the essence of God, Jesus had the full deck. Paul is not saying all of God was in Jesus, but he is saying that the true and full essence of God’s unique nature was in Jesus in bodily form.

In Christ, the infinite was in the finite; the eternal in the temporal; the spiritual in the physical; Deity in humanity. All the *intransitive attributes* of the Divine nature made their home in Christ. Is the Father omniscient? So is Christ! Is God omnipotent? So is Christ! Is God omnipresent? Somehow, someway Christ shared the Divine nature. The knowledge and the power and the presence that created the Earth, the moon, the Sun, the Milky Way, and the billions of spiral galaxies and global clusters was in Christ, on Earth, in bodily form.

Our thoughts of Jesus are too small! We have too much self-esteem and **not** enough Christ-esteem. Jesus is more than a good teacher, more than a prophet, He is fully God and fully man. Think more of Jesus!

His name is “Wonderful! (pele<sup>12</sup>)” He deserves honor, but more than honor. He deserves worship<sup>13</sup> -- for “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.”

Need completeness? Come to Christ! Let us never use His name in vain and let us never be ashamed to be called a “Christian” for in the Lord Jesus Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form (Stockton, D302, Think More of Jesus).

### **MORE EVIDENCE OF CHRIST’S DEITY**

1. By the fact He speaks of “*His angels*” (auvtou), that is, the angels belonging to Him (Matthew 13:41; 16:27; 24:31; Mark 13:32).

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<sup>11</sup> In emphasizing the Deity of Christ it is important to note that He was fully God, but not all of God was in Christ; that is, the Father remains distinct from the Son.

<sup>12</sup> *Pele* (wonderful) means extraordinary, a marvel – something splendid, sensational, spectacular, a wonderment.

<sup>13</sup> Worship has many meanings and applications, but the fundamental meaning of worship is to “*bow the knee,*” to acknowledge His authority, and to arrange one’s self under His government and instructions (See Psalm 97). Under this definition worship means coming to hear God’s law and be instructed by it. A great listener is a great worshipper.

2. By the fact He speaks of heaven come to earth, that is, as one who was in heaven and is now on Earth (See the three parables in John 3:31).
3. By the fact He speaks from his own authority. He never said, “*Thus saith the Lord.*” Rather, He used the phrase, “*But I say unto you . . .*” (Matthew 5:22). It is used seven times in the sermon. Notice his authority in this title: . . . *the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath*” (Matthew 12:8).
4. By the fact He received worship (John 20:21; Matthew 28:9). When onlookers saw the miracles of Paul and Barnabus and sought to worship them, they ripped their clothes and asserted their mortal humanity (Acts 14:13-14). Jesus did nothing of the kind. He accepted worship. He was either an egomaniac or truly the Son of God.
5. By the fact Christ demanded faith in Himself as God directed men to place their faith in Him (John 14:1; Matthew 10:32). Jesus said, “*Believe in me.*” The word “*God*” and “*me*” (evme.) are an accusative receiving the action of the word “*believe.*” However, “*me*” is in the emphatic position placing a slight emphasis on the fact that a person must not only believe in God, but believe upon JESUS!
6. By the fact of his eternal promises (Matthew 28:19, 20). Who could be with the disciples forever but the Lord Jesus Christ?
7. By the fact He is the icon of the unseen God in Colossians 1:15; i.e. He is the true representation of the true God; the physical manifestation of the invisible God; the historical appearance of the eternal God; the Creator in flesh.

### **WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT HIM**

***John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).***

A “*word*” is a verbal representation of a concrete concept or thing. By calling Jesus “the logos,” John is communicating that Jesus is the representation of God. Because the predicate comes first (emphatic position), the emphasis is on full deity (See notes on the Logos earlier in this chapter).

***Thomas: “And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).***

Arians interpreted Thomas statement as an exclamation, “Oh, my lord! Oh, my god!” But, this is not an exclamation. It is a truth assertion derived from synthetic evidence that Jesus was alive. If Jesus truly rose from the dead, then He is God and He is Lord. Thomas was not a simpleton, but an empiricist; i.e. he demanded legal evidence for such extreme claims coming to him by his brethren. Thomas touched. Thomas saw. Thomas heard. And, the Thomas believed that Jesus was truly God, truly LORD!

***Paul:*** In Colossians 2:15, Paul says that Jesus is the image of the invisible God (o(j evstin eivkw.n tou/ qeou/ tou/ avora,tou). Jesus is called “*the image*” of God. The word “*image*” (eivkw.n, ikon) means “representation” and was used to describe Caesar’s image on coins (Matthew 22:20). The word *eivkw.n* is an anarthrous noun indicating the quality of the substantive; that is, that Jesus is the exact representation of the invisible God.



Jesus is also called the “*firstborn*” (Colossians 1:15). By using the term *firstborn*, Paul is referring to Jesus’ pre-eminence (Exodus 4:22), not a “birth” or “creation” or “beginning.” Jesus has existed from “*everlasting to everlasting*” (Micah 5:2). Furthermore, the created order is attributed to Jesus making Him the Creator (Colossians 1:16; Genesis 1:1). Furthermore, Paul went on to say that all the “*fullness*” dwells in Him. But, what does Paul mean by “*fullness*?” In the next chapter (Colossians 2:9), Paul says He is all the fullness of deity (pa/n to. plh,rwma th/j qeo,thtoj). “*Of deity*” (th/j qeo,thtoj) is in the genitive meaning that the “*fullness*” has its source in that which exclusively belongs to God. Paul is not saying that Jesus has a few divine qualities, but that all of the virtues and attributes which we associate with God “*dwelt*” (fill the house) in glorified humanity. Because of this fact, all that a Christian needs for meaning and fulfillment are found in the risen Christ (Colossians 2:10).

In Titus 2:13, Paul says, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ ( tvvhs dozhs tou megalou Qeou kai swthros hmwn Ihsou Xristou.).” We look for that blessed hope of the glory of the great God and Savior of us Jesus Christ. “*Theos*” is preceded by a definite article implying that the Savior of us is also deity.

**Peter:** And Simon Peter answered and said, “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16). By this, Peter meant that Jesus was the Messiah as He understood Jewish theology. Notice how he links the term “*Christ*” with the title “*Son of God*.” There is only one living God in Jewish theology and Jesus is His Son!

**The Author of Hebrews:** In Hebrews 1:2-3 we see this statement about Christ, “*Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power . . .*” The phrase “*brightness of glory*” refers to YHWH’s shekinah glory, the dwelling glory, between the cherubim. The risen, glorified Christ has been invested with the radiance of Divine beauty. Jesus is called the “*express image of his person*.” The word “*image*” (carakth.r) means “*full expression*” or “*exact likeness*.” Jesus is said to be the “*exact image of His person*” (carakth.r th/j u`posta,sewj aurtou/). The word “*person*” comes from the Greek word *th/j u`posta,sewj* (*hupostasis*) which means “*foundation*” or the *fundamental substance* of a thing or a title deed representing ownership of a thing. The NASB properly translates this word “*nature*.” Is God a personal, infinite Spirit? Likewise, Jesus has all the attributes we associate with deity. In Hebrews 1:8, Jesus is directly called “*God*.”

*Hebrews 1:8 But unto the Son (pros de ton uion) he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.*

In Psalm 45:6, *Elohim* is addressed: “*thy throne*” is possessive, that is, it is God’s throne. In Hebrews *pros de ton uion* is addressed toward the Son, *son* (*uion*) is in the accusative, the objective of address. The question is in reference to the term “*O God*.” Is it vocative? Does it express “*your throne, o God, is forever and ever*.” or, should the passage be interpreted as a nominative; i.e. “*God is your throne for ever and ever*?” Personally, the former makes more sense.

In his letter known as 1 John, John seeks to weed out the false from the true. He wants his readers to know how to tell who truly knows God and who is lying about knowing God. One of tests of fellowship is the confession in 1 John 4:1-6. The Gnostics could not reconcile good and evil in the flesh and denied that the Christ was actually present on earth in human flesh. John informs his readers that confessing that Christ was truly human was an essential matter of the faith. The first heresy was not denying Jesus’ deity, but denying his humanity! John assumes the deity of Christ and was fighting for the fact that he

“*touched*” and “*beheld*” the physical form of Christ during his youth (1 John 1:1-3). Using rules of evidence in Roman law, John testifies he saw, touched, and beheld the living, risen Christ! The penalty for perjury was death in a Roman court. John accepted the risk.

In His Book of Revelation, John portrays Christ as the “*King of kings, and Lord of lords*.” John shows us the present risen life of Christ and what He is doing to advance the will of God in history. In Revelation 1:5, Jesus is introduced as “*the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth*,” “*the Son of Man*” (Revelation 1:13). Next John shows us Christ robed in his High Priestly garments exercising his ministry as part of his highly exalted life. He is the transcendent mysterious messianic figure in Daniel seven coming before the Ancient of Days. Christ is seen in his official, Messianic, priestly apparel. He is not passively administrating the affairs of the kingdom, but active in judging the church and advancing the gospel through his people in a hostile world.

### **CHRIST’S WORKS REFLECT HIS DEITY**

One has to ask, “If God were to come to earth and become a man, what would you expect him to do to prove it?”

- Would you expect Him to cure disease? Christ healed the blind, the lame, and the deaf?
- Would you expect Him to defeat death and to solve man’s fundamental problem? Christ raised three people from the dead before His own resurrection.
- Would you expect Him to exert power over nature? Christ calmed the storm and the sea and multiplied the fish and loaves.
- Would you expect Him to reveal some great words and insights into the perplexing issues of life? Christ was the greatest moral teacher who ever lived.
- Would you expect him to pronounce great moral judgments? Christ forgave men, and announced judgments (Matthew 24).

In every way, Christ did what one would expect God to do?

If Christ rose from the dead, then He is God! Follow Him!

Conclusion: Christ is the unique Son of God. His visitation to Earth was a divine visitation. Christ’s gospel is unique. He does not claim to be *a way* but *the only way* to the Father (John 14:6). He did not even say that Christianity was the way to God. He is the way. Salvation is in no other (Acts 4:12). Salvation is only through Jesus Christ. Those who fail to accept Him as Lord and Savior will perish and will not enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:36). A correct gospel must include preaching and teaching on the person of Christ, the first pillar of the gospel.

## **PILLAR TWO: THE HISTORY OF CHRIST**



## 13. INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF CHRIST

Everything rests on the existence of Christ.

Fyodor Dostoevski, Russian author, stated “The most pressing question on the problem of faith is whether a man as a civilized being can believe in the divinity of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, for therein rests the whole of our faith”

If gospel records of Christ are mythologized then our faith is null and void. Truth matters! And, it is the history of Christ that is denied by liberals. Liberal are academics that believe the gospel records are products of human imagination. Bertrand Russel, liberal philosopher, gave a lecture in 1927 to the National Secular Society in South London wherein he stated:

*"Historically, it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did we do not know anything about Him." Bertrand Russell, "Why I am not a Christian." (Russel, 1957).*

Russell along with **Karl Marx**, **Sigmund Freud**, and **Frederich Nietzsche** launched a movement called “antagonistic atheism” which believed that Christianity’s influence was a thing of the past and should be buried in a casket in the graveyard of dead religions. So powerful was this movement, it left Germans without defenses in the rise of the Third Reich in the 1930s. The Lutheran Church was so liberalized, it didn’t have the strength of a pretzel to resist Nazi statism. This movement with its evolutionary base gained a foothold among college students in the United States during the fifties . . . and is a major tenet of socialism and the Democratic Party in the United States today. Abortion, secularism, skepticism, and same-sex unions are monsters given birth by atheistic skepticism.

Every major news outlet like NBC, ABC, or MSNBC operates from the presumption the gospel records are a product of man, that Christ’s miracles are mythological inventions of the early church. If the gospel records are not true, then our faith is in vain.

Other skeptics have denied the historicity of Christ:

- **Bruno Bauer**, a 19<sup>th</sup> century German theologian read the French skeptics and likewise believed Jesus was a mythical character (Martin, 1993).
- **G.A. Wells**, a former professor of German at the *University of London* was a prominent skeptic. He wrote a series of five books on this topic, arguing that Paul and other first century Christian leaders believed that the story of Jesus was created by the church in the second and third century: "as a basically supernatural personage only obscurely on Earth as a man at some unspecified period in the past" (Wells, 1999, pp. 13-18).
- **Michael Martin**, Professor of Philosophy of Boston University, in his book, The Case Against Christianity, concluded in his studies there was insufficient evidence that Jesus ever existed (Martin, 1993).

Much of this skepticism is based on the alleged *Gospel of Q*, a presumptive source document the disciples might have used to perpetuate their teaching — but, what is the evidence of Q? Why would anyone overturn the primary source documents of the gospels? All conservative scholars believe the gospels were written before 70 A.D. They have the right stuff at the right time; that is, the historical detail in the

gospels could only have been written by men familiar with the theater in the Middle East prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The vast majority of historians and theologians have always believed in the reality of Jesus' life. The skeptical view ..."*has always been held by a small minority of investigators, usually 'outsiders'.*" (i.e. non-Christian investigators) (Doherty, The Jesus Puzzle: Pieces in the Puzzle of Christian Origins, 1997).

Even H. G. Wells could say,

*I am an historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history.—H. G. Wells*

## **14. SECULAR EVIDENSE OF JESUS' HISTORICITY**

### **The Historicity of Jesus Christ: Did He Really Exist?, 2007**

**CORNELIUS TACITUS** (55 - 120 A.D.) Tacitus was a first and second century Roman historian who lived through the reigns of over half a dozen Roman emperors. Considered one of the greatest historians of ancient Rome, Tacitus verifies the Biblical account of Jesus' execution at the hands of Pontius Pilate who governed Judea from 26-36 A.D. during the reign of Tiberius.

*"Christus, the founder of the (Christian) name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius. But the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also." Annals XV, 44*

**GAIUS SUETONIUS TRANQUILLUS** (69 - 130 A.D.) Suetonius was a prominent Roman historian who recorded the lives of the Roman Caesars and the historical events surrounding their reigns. He served as a court official under Hadrian and as an analyst for the Imperial House. Suetonius records the expulsion of the Christian Jews from Rome (mentioned in Acts 18:2) and confirms the Christian faith being founded by Christ.

*"As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, (Claudius) expelled them from Rome." Life of Claudius 25.4*

**THALLUS** (~ 52 A.D.) Although his works exist only in fragments, Julius Africanus debates Thallus' explanation of the midday darkness which occurred during the Passover of Jesus' crucifixion. Thallus tries to dismiss the darkness as a natural occurrence (a solar eclipse) but Africanus argues (and any astronomer can confirm) a solar eclipse cannot physically occur during a full moon due to the alignment of the planets. Phlegon of Tralles, a 2nd century secular historian, also mentions the darkness and tries to dismiss it as a solar eclipse. He also states the event occurred during the time of Tiberius Caesar.

*"On the whole world there pressed a most fearful darkness. The rocks were rent by an earthquake and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down. This darkness Thallus, in the third book of his History, calls, as appears to me without reason, an eclipse of*

*the sun. For the Hebrews celebrate the passover on the 14th day according to the moon, and the passion of our Savior falls on the day before the passover. But an eclipse of the sun takes place only when the moon comes under the sun. And it cannot happen at any other time... Phlegon records that, in the time of Tiberius Caesar, at full moon, there was a full eclipse of the sun from the sixth hour to the ninth-manifestly that one of which we speak. Chronography XVIII, 47*

**PLINY THE YOUNGER** (63 - 113 A.D) Pliny the Younger admits to torturing and executing Christians who refused to deny Christ. Those who denied the charges were spared and ordered to exalt the Roman gods and curse the name of Christ. Pliny addresses his concerns to Emperor Trajan that too many citizens were being killed for their refusal to deny their faith.

*"I asked them directly if they were Christians...those who persisted, I ordered away... Those who denied they were or ever had been Christians...worshiped both your image and the images of the gods and cursed Christ. They used to gather on a stated day before dawn and sing to Christ as if he were a god... All the more I believed it necessary to find out what was the truth from two servant maids, which were called deaconesses, by means of torture. Nothing more did I find than a disgusting, fanatical superstition. Therefore I stopped the examination, and hastened to consult you...on account of the number of people endangered. For many of all ages, all classes, and both sexes already are brought into danger..." Pliny's letter to Emperor Trajan*

**CELSUS** (~ 178 A.D.) Celsus was a second century Roman author and avid opponent of Christianity. He went to great lengths to disprove the divinity of Jesus yet never denied His actual existence. Unfortunately for Celsus, he sets himself up for criticism by mimicking the exact accusations brought against Jesus by the Pharisees which had already been addressed and refuted in the New Testament. There are two very important facts regarding Celsus which make him one of the most important witnesses in this discussion:

Though most secular passages are accused of being Christian interpolations, we can accept with *certainty* this is not the case with Celsus! The sheer volume of his writings (specifically designed to discredit Christianity) coupled with the hostile accusations presented in his work dismiss this chance immediately.

The idea of Celsus getting his information entirely from Christian sources (another recurring accusation against secular evidence) is wholly absurd. Though he is obviously aware of his opponents' beliefs (as anyone who is engaging in a debate *should* be), Celsus wrote his exposition in the form of a dialogue between a "Jewish Critic" and himself. This gives us cause to believe he used non-Christian (probably Jewish) sources.

While there are external evidences of Christ, the primary evidence for His existence is the primary source documents we know as the gospels. We expect those who knew Christ best to write about him, and that the custody of these source documents to be in the hands of the church. And, this is an indisputable fact of history. Rather than drink vinegar from the sour grapes of skeptics, it is better to drink pure wine from the gospel accounts.

### **REFRESHING QUOTES**

*As the centuries pass, the evidence is accumulating that, measured by His effect on history, Jesus is the most influential life ever lived on this planet. -- Historian Kenneth Scott Latourette*

*I accept the resurrection of Easter Sunday not as an invention of the community of disciples, but as a historical event. If the resurrection of Jesus from the dead on that Easter Sunday were a public event which had been made known...not only to the 530 Jewish witnesses but to the entire population, all Jews would have become followers of Jesus. -- Pinchas Lapide, Orthodox Jewish scholar, Germany (born 1922)*

*No one else holds or has held the place in the heart of the world which Jesus holds. Other gods have been as devoutly worshipped; no other man has been so devoutly loved. -- John Knox, Scottish Clergyman, Protestant Reformation Leader*

*Even those who have renounced Christianity and attack it, in their inmost being still follow the Christian ideal, for hitherto neither their subtlety nor the ardour of their hearts has been able to create a higher ideal of man and of virtue than the ideal given by Christ of old. -- Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Russian Writer.*

*Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander the Great, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, he shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of school, he spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, he set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times. --Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church.*

*Jesus is God spelling Himself out in language that men can understand. -- S.D. Gordon, prolific author who wrote more than 25 devotional books.*

*As a child I received instruction both in the Bible and in the Talmud. I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene....No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life. -- Albert Einstein*

*There is something so pure and frank and noble about Him that to doubt His sincerity would be like doubting the brightness of the sun. -- Charles Edward Jefferson, The Character of Jesus.*

*Because Christianity's influence is so pervasive throughout much of the world, it is easy to forget how radical its beliefs once were. Jesus' resurrection forever changed Christians' view of death. Rodney Stark, sociologist at the University of Washington, points out that when a major plague hit the ancient Roman Empire, Christians had surprisingly high survival rates. Why? Most Roman citizens would banish any plague-stricken person from their household. But because Christians had no fear of death, they nursed their sick instead of throwing them out on the streets. Therefore, many Christians survived the plague. -- "2000 Years of Jesus" by Kenneth L. Woodward, NEWSWEEK, March 29, 1999, p. 55.*

**The second Pillar of the Gospel is the History of Christ** (1 Corinthians 15:1-12). Jesus' appearance in space and time beginning with His birth and ending with his resurrection was an historical reality. **It is good news that Jesus' history is true and certain!**

Because Christ's history is real and true, the theology of the gospel is true, and, this is also good news! History, however, is not theology. Theology is the interpretation of history. In this section, we will not look at theology, but the history of Christ.

This section will highlight the preexistence of Christ (PE), the birth of Christ (BIR), the life of Christ (L), the death of Christ (D), the burial of Christ (B), the resurrection of Christ (R), the present risen life (PRL) or present exalted life of Christ (PEL), and his coming glory (CG).

## 15. THE PREEXISTENCE OF CHRIST

Christ's life did not begin in Bethlehem. The manger was not His first touch stone on this planet. His existence did not begin where He was born. In fact, He did not have a beginning. He was God. He became a man. He is called the God and man. If there is no pre-existence of Christ, then there is no incarnation of Christ. His pre-existence is not a doctrine, but it is everywhere presumed.

His origin did not begin in Bethlehem, but his manhood did. He did not become God's Son at His incarnation. He is God Eternal without beginning or ending, the Alpha and Omega, the A and the Z. Bethlehem was the intersection of time and eternity; the cloverleaf of deity and humanity; the junction of heaven and earth. But, it did not identify His origin (Micah 5:2). Christ pre-existed before His incarnation, and this truth is foundational to all of the New Testament. J. Oswald Sanders said it best, "If He (Christ) was not pre-existent, He cannot be God, and if He is not God, He cannot be Creator and Redeemer," (1971, p. 20).

### HIS PRE-EXISTENT STATE

Christ was co-present with *Theos* before the world was, and He is called *ho logos*:

***John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.***

<sup>GNT</sup> John 1:1 VEn avrch/| h=n o` lo,goj( kai. o` lo,goj h=n pro.j to.n qeo,n( kai. qeo.j h=n o` lo,gojÅ

***Thiessen says,***

*"That John conceives of the Logos as personal is evident from the structure of his sentence. He says theos en ho logos, which means that the Logos is God, but does not mean that he is all of God. If he had said, ho theos en ho logos, he would have made the terms God and Logos convertible and so have taught Sabellianism" (Thiessen, 1979, p. 209). The Christian form of Monism is called Sabbelism. Sabellianism states that God is One and that God cannot exist as three being in one. Sabellianism states it was God himself who died on the cross. Jesus as a being was a form of expression or mode of God.*



*John 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was (pro. tou/ to.n ko,smon).*

*Revelation 19:13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God (o` lo,goj tou/ qeou).*

In Jesus' prayer, He prays for full restoration to his pre-incarnate state of glory and fellowship *beside* the father (para. seautw/): "O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5).

He is called "*the firstborn of all creation*" (Colossians 1:15).

*Colossians 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.*

(ejstin eijkw;n tou' qeou' tou' ajoravtou, prwtovtoko" pavsh" ktivsew,)

*Colossians 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

*Hebrews 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.*

*Psalms 89:27 Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.*

*Exodus 4:22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn.*

*John 1:20 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.*

(ou-to,j evstin u`pe.r ou- evgw. ei=pon( VOpi,sw mou e;rcetai avnh.r o)j e;mprosqe,n mou ge,gonen( o(ti prw/to,j mou h=nv).)

John says Christ "*came before me*" (e;mprosqe,n mou ge,gonen; perfect) because "*He was before me*" (o(ti prw/to,j mou h=nv; imperfect); that is, he existed before John was born.

The title, "*the firstborn*" (prwtovtoko," *prototoko*), does not refer to the genesis of Christ or to his physical birth. Rather, the term refers to Christ's position, His supremacy, and His pre-eminence in the eyes of the Father. It must be remembered that the supreme, transcendent God condescends to man in his explanation of truth. The word *firstborn* is used of Israel to show her status before God (Exodus 4:22). In John 1:30, John the Baptist refers to Christ as the "preferred" One, as the One who existed before him. John was born first and Christ was born second in time. But, Christ was the *firstborn* in status and importance.

### **CHRIST'S TESTIMONY ABOUT HIS PRE-EXISTENCE**

- To Nicodemus, Christ said He was the One from heaven (John. 3:13).
- To the Jews, Christ said He existed before Abraham (John 8:58).
- To the Father, Christ acknowledged He possessed glory before He entered this world (John 17:1-3).

## **PAUL ON CHRIST'S PRE-EXISTENCE**

***Revelation 19:13 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.***

- He was rich in love: Christ possessed a full relationship with the Father.
- He was rich in glory: Christ was robed with splendor.
- He was rich in honor: All the angels worshiped Him.
- He was rich in power: He created the world

When the Philippians were struggling with unity, Paul sought to motivate the Philippians to humility by pointing them to the *Great Divestiture of Christ* (Philippians 2:5-12). Paul declared that Christ existed in the “*form of God*” (o)j evn morf/| qeou/).

Being in the *form of God* means that He possessed the attributes of Deity. The form of this verb is important. u`pa,rcwn is a present, active participle. It communicates present, continuous existence as the “I Am” of the OT. It infers that He was “equal with God” (i;sa qew/: adverb meaning “equally”). Paul says that when Christ came to earth that “*He emptied Himself taking the form of a servant* (avlla. e`auto.n evke,nwsen morf.n dou,lou labw,). This *emptying* is called the *kenosis* or the *Great Divestiture of Christ*; i.e. in humbling himself to become a man, the great “I AM” had to lay aside his royal robe of Divine glory to take on humanity.

His work as Creator necessitates His preexistence. As the Firstborn, Christ was the Divine Administrator, the Lord of creation. “He was” before the world was created; through Him the world came into existence; and, He is the heir of creation, the “heir of all things.” So, of Him and through Him and for Him are all things.

*John 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

*John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.*

*Hebrews 1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.*

*1 Corinthians 8:6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.*

*Colossians 1:6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.*

*Genesis 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

*Proverbs 8:30 Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.*

### **THE OT PROVIDES EVIDENCE OF HIS PRE-EXISTENCE**

- He is called “*the Son*” (Psalm 2:7).
- He is called “*LORD*” (Genesis 19:24).
- He is called “*God*” (Psalm 45:6).
- He is called “*the everlasting Father*” (Isaiah 9:6).

### **THEOPHANIES INDICATE PRE-EXISTENCE**

The theophanies in the OT as the Angel of the Lord indicate that Christ existed before He entered this world. No man has seen God at any time. When the people of old said they saw God, they actually saw the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ.

- He appeared to Hagar (Genesis 16:7-14).
- He appeared to Abraham (Genesis 22:11-18).
- He appeared to Jacob (Genesis 31:11-13).
- He appeared to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:2-5).
- He led them out of Egypt (Exodus 14:9; 23; 20; 32:34).
- He intercepted Balaam (Numbers 22:22-35).
- He delivered Gideon (Judges 6:11-24).
- He appeared to Manoah (Judges 13:2-24).
- He sent pestilence thru Him to David (1 Chronicles 21:1-27).
- He fed Elijah and refreshed him (1 Kings 19:5ff).
- He rescued Hezekiah and the Jews (2 Kings 19:35).
- He was in the fire with Daniel’s friends (Daniel 3).
- He appeared before Joshua the High Priest (Zechariah 3:1).
- In summary, Christ existed before the creation, and visited earth many times before He was born in Bethlehem. His preexistence points to the fact that Christ is divine.

## **16. THE SEVEN DOWNWARD STEPS OF CHRIST**

has been said, “*Be humble or stumble.*” If one wants to walk with God, he needs to be humble. It

Before us is a picture of the humility of Christ as seen by his seven downward steps; that is, the apostles taught not only the historicity of Christ, but believed in His preexistence (Philippians 2:5-12)..

### **STEP ONE: Selfless Attitude**

***“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:” (Philippians. 2:6)***

William Barclay (1907-1978) says,

*“The word which the King James Version translates "being" is from the Greek verb (huparchein) which is not the common Greek word for "being." This word describes that which a man is in his very essence and which cannot be changed. It describes that part of a man which, in any circumstances, remains the same. So Paul begins by saying that Jesus was essentially and unalterably God.” It is not possible to think of Jesus just as a good teacher. Our text verifies our faith that Jesus was truly divine. A good teacher, you can ignore. Being divine, no man can afford to ignore (Barclay, 2003).*

What is it like to be a king with beautiful clothes, a golden crown, and immediate respect? In Eternity, Jesus knew the glory and radiance and honor of being the Creator. Choirs with a hundred thousand voices lent their talent to sing His praises. One day the Father commissioned His Son to give it all up for a mission on earth to save sinners from their sins. Lacking in the Son was any sense of greed, covetous, selfish ambition, competition, or aspiration. He chose the finite over the infinite; the limitation of man rather than the unconfiness of God; the cloudy perspective of humanity over the clarity of the divine perspective.

“*Mind*” (Phroneo) refers to the basic orientation, bent, and thought patterns of one's mind, rather than to the intellect itself. When announcing this in the present tense (continuous action, lifestyle) active voice (personal decision of the will) imperative mood (command not suggestion), Paul drives in a point.

Someone observed the hardest instrument to play in the orchestra is second fiddle. Pride is essentially competitive. Pride is not content with having honor. It must have more honor. Pride is not content with a piece of the pie, it must have the whole pie. There was no pride in Jesus. He is happy playing second fiddle.

Bits & Pieces illustrates the futility of greed in Leo Tolstoy’s story about a peasant farmer who was not satisfied with his portion in life. He wanted it all. One day he received a generous offer. For 1000 rubles, he could buy all the land he could walk around in a day. The only catch in the deal was that he had to be back at his starting point by sundown. Exhausting himself in a mad dash marathon to cover as much territory as possible, the farmer realized he was far from home. In the afternoon, he picked up his pace. Sweat rolled down his forehead. His heart raced. As the sun began to sink below the horizon he came within sight of the finish line. Gasping for breath, his heart pounding, he called upon every bit of strength left in his body and staggered across the line just before the sun disappeared. He immediately collapsed, blood streaming from his mouth. In a few minutes he was dead. Afterwards, his servants dug a grave. It was not much over six feet long and three feet wide. (“How Much Land Does a Man Need?”)

### **STEP TWO: Divestiture**

***“He Emptied Himself”***

From the verb “*emptied himself*,” theologians have developed “*Kenosis Theories*.” A question arises, “*What did Christ give up when He came became man?*” Some have errantly concluded that He gave up his deity; that is, in becoming man, He gave up omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. Others have concluded He did not know that He was the Creator of the world; or that He did not realize Who He was until His baptism.

My understanding of this passage is that in becoming man, Christ did not give up His deity as much as He gave up the glory and honor associated with deity. In becoming man, Christ did not abandon His divine attributes as much as He assumed the nature of man. This is called the *hypostatic union*. Christ was truly God and truly man.

To grasp this, let’s look at an illustration from *Today in the Word*, April 3, 1992. A reception honoring musician Sir Robert Mayer on his 100th birthday, elderly British socialite Lady Diana Cooper fell into conversation with a friendly woman who seemed to know her well. Lady Diana's failing eyesight prevented her from recognizing her fellow guest, until she peered more closely at the magnificent diamonds and realized she was talking to Queen Elizabeth! Overcome with embarrassment, Lady Diana curtsied and stammered, "Ma'am, oh, ma'am, I'm sorry ma'am. I didn't recognize you without your crown!" "It was so much Sir Robert's evening," the queen replied, "that I decided to leave it behind."

In becoming man, there was no regret, no bitterness, and no envy of the Father in the Son.

### **STEP THREE: Servanthood**

#### ***“Taking the form of a servant.”***

There are two Greek words for form, “*morphe*” and “*schema*.” Both must be translated “form” because there is no other English equivalent, but they do not mean the same thing. *Morphe* describes a condition that never alters; *schema* describes a state which can change from time to time and from circumstance to circumstance. For instance, the *morphe* of any human being is humanity and this never changes; but his *schema* is that part of our humanity which continually changing. A baby, a child, a boy, a youth, a man of middle age, an old man always have the *morphe* of humanity, but the outward *schema* changes all the time (Barclay, 2003) . In Matthew 17: 2, Jesus was transfigured before them. This is the word *metamorphoo*, which was a revelation of the essence of Jesus and His unalterable divine nature.

One of the questions my grandparents use to ask me as a boy was, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” My answer included being a big football star. This question is asked every boy and I do not know of any that include the answer: “I want to be a servant or a butler or a bellhop.” Even as Christians we want to do big things for God. We live in a success driven, corporate world where men are discontent with the normal and mundane.

Dr. **Samuel Brengle** of the Salvation Army loosely translated this verse, “*He girdeth Himself with a towel.*”

Our Lord was not just any servant, He was the Servant of the Lord. Most of us serve our own desires, but Jesus could truly say, “*Not my will, but Thy will be done.*” Many of us serve, but we lack a servant mind. Not so with Christ. The Savior not only served, He possessed servant attitudes. When He was tempted on the Mount of Temptation by Satan and urged to take leave of the fast commanded by the Father, He responded, “*It is written.*”

In **Philip Keller's** marvelous book, Sheep Dog, Keller tells the story of a stray Australian sheep dog on his sheep ranch. Though Keller needed a dog for his ranch, the dog was a stray and avoided any contact with Keller. Keller decided to feed the dog and not compel him to submit. After several weeks, the dog put his nose in Keller's hand and gave himself to the rancher. Keller trained the dog. Perfectly trained the dog would heel, sit, bark, and herd sheep. Often the dog would go into a thicket to chase out wayward sheep and come out with all kinds of thorns in his side and paws. He was the perfect dog. When it came time to sell the ranch, Keller euthanized the animal. In explaining why he did this, Keller explained that "the dog had given himself to me completely." The ranch was sold and the dog's work was finished. He was mine and the dog trusted me. It was my decision to end his life. End of the answer.

Likewise, Jesus was God's Sheep Dog sent to earth to round up strays. Ordered to the cross, Jesus obeyed. He was the *doulos* of God who from first to last, from beginning to end was fully, wholly, totally dedicated to the will of God.

#### **STEP FOUR: Humanity**

***"Was made in the likeness of men . . ."***

On that first Christmas morning, the Son of God lay in that manger with two little ears and eyes, a nose, a mouth, ten fingers, two arms, and two legs and ten toes. He was truly man subject to all the limitations and incumbencies that human beings face. This was a gigantic step down for Christ. For you and I to become an ant would not be half the step it took for the Son to become a man. Now he would experience all the irritations that men feel in life: fatigue, hunger, and pain. He understood heat, cold, sweat, and the tears of humanity. He learned how to crawl, to walk, to speak. He went through the growth stages of humanity: birth, growth, puberty, and adulthood.

#### **STEP FIVE: Humility**

***"Being found in the fashion of man, he humbled himself."***

From the word "*fashion*," we get the word *schematic*. Like all men, Jesus walked, talked, ate, and slept. He was fully man. Not only was Christ a man, he was a humble man. Unlike the rest of us, Jesus had a choice of what kind of man to be.

- He could have been born in Jerusalem, the City of Kings, but he was born in Bethlehem, the smallest of Jewish villages.
- He could have been born into a family of wealth and privilege, but he was born a carpenter's son.
- He could have been born in a sterile hospital, but he was born in a stable.
- He could have grown up in the city with all its innovations and excitement, but he was raised in Nazareth, the "other side of the tracks" so to speak—the hillbillies of Israel.
- He could have been a doctor or lawyer or statesman, but he chose the occupation of a carpenter.
- He could have owned many clothes, but at the cross soldiers gambled for his only garment.
- He could have been born rich, but when giving an illustration on taxes, he had to borrow a penny.

### **STEP SIX: Obedience**

***“He became obedient unto death . . .”***

The test of obedience is to surrender to God’s will when things do not go our way. It is not easy to obey, when death stares us in the face. Death has many indignities including sounds and smells and fears and pain. In surrendering himself to the Father’s will, he faced the most common plight of all men. There is no pride in death. All powers to save life are taken away. All control is stripped from the victim. All rights are taken away. The final prayer for salvation from death is answered with a “No.” So aware of the Father’s resolute will, Jesus prayed with great drops of blood streaming from his forehead, *“If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”* Dependent on the Father, he waited to be raised from the dead.

### **STEP SEVEN: Shame**

***“Even the death of the cross.”***

The final humiliation of Christ was the kind of death he died. If I could choose my own death, it would be a hero’s death — an instantaneous death for a worthy cause — something like the death of actor Bruce Willis in the movie “Armageddon” where the only hope for earth was for Commander Willis to blow up the asteroid by self-detonation.

**The cross is the Christian’s most sacred symbol.** We often wear smooth, silver crosses around our necks. However, we need to remember that there was no status connected to crucifixion in Roman times. The wooden cross had splinters and knots that chafed the skin. Accusation, charges, incrimination, damning verdicts, beatings, stripping of clothes, impalement, nakedness, puncture, agonizing pain, infection, and public humiliation choked all optimism out the victim. Crucifixion is a death by tetanus poisoning where in the latter stages a burning thirst screams for relief, while muscles contort and cramp causing a person to die of asphyxiation.

*Philippians 2:10-12 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Humble in life and humbled by death, the Lord Jesus waited on the Father to raise Him from the dead. Today, that babe in Bethlehem is called *“the Christ,” “the King,” “the Son,” “the Savior,” “that at the name of Jesus every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”*

A long time ago, a good king ruled in Persia. Because he wanted to know how they lived, he dressed in the clothes of a working man or a beggar, and went to the homes of the poor. No one knew he was their ruler. On one occasion, he met a very poor man who lived in a cellar. He ate the man’s simple food. He spoke cheerfully and kindly to him. Then he left. Later he visited the poor man again and disclosed his identity by saying, “I am your king!” The king thought the man would surely ask for some gift or favor, but he didn’t. Instead he said, “You left your palace and your glory to visit me in this dark, dreary place. You ate my simple food. You brought joy to my heart! To others you have given your rich gifts. To me, you have given yourself!”

Let us never forget the seven downward steps of Jesus. Because He took steps downward, we can take a step forward. Because of His humiliation, we have salvation. God was among us and has risen above us to save us, to guide us, and to deliver us.

## **17. THE BIRTH OF CHRIST**

It is good news that Jesus is the Christ; that this unique individual chosen by the Father appeared in history, in time and space to redeem man; that His history is true and certain.

It is essential to comprehend that the birth of Christ was a real, historical event. It is not a figment of someone's imagination, a clever scheme trumpeted by religious zealots, or a mythological figure created by the church. His birth and death created the church and ultimately dominated the mind of the western world.

The whole attempt to eradicate the celebration of Christmas by the Jewish owned media is a product of antichrists denying the history of our Lord. And, it must ***not*** be tolerated even for a second. Toleration is doctrine preached when the minority is trying to supplant the majority. Jesus' birth was a real, historical event that has changed more lives for the better than any other.

### **THE HISTORICAL SETTING OF HIS BIRTH**

***Luke 2:1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)***

Rome began to control Eastern affairs when Pompey besieged Jerusalem for three months in 63 B.C. He did so because Aristobulus and his brother, Hyrcannus, both sought to control the country. When Rome backed Hyrcanus, Aristobulus sieged Jerusalem and shortly thereafter, Rome invaded the Holy City. At this time, the Jews lost their sovereignty and became a puppet state of Rome.

At the time of Christ's birth, Palestine was under control of Rome while Augustus was Caesar (27 B.C.-14 A.D.). Augustus and Herod the Great were friends. Herod's two sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, were educated in Rome under Augustus' watchful eye.

Herod was the aged egotist ruling the land when Mary first placed Christ in the manger in Bethlehem. Herod managed to survive politically through the twists and turns of the volatile Roman state for thirty-five years. When Christ was born, he was four months away from death.

Herod's last days were filled with bitter conflict. He ordered an execution of one of his sons a week before his death. Alexander and Aristobulus were formally accused of treason before Augustus. Augustus later groaned that he would rather be Herod's hog than one of Herod's sons. Previously, he burned alive the instigators that vandalized the Roman eagle perched on top of the temple. His wife Miriame, his mother-in-law, and Miriame's brother were all victims of Herod's murderous cruelty.

It was Herod the Great that gave the order to kill all the babies in and around Bethlehem just months before his passing. Herod ruled Palestsine, but shortly after his death the district was placed under a Roman prefect who was subject to the watchful eye of Quirinius, the governor of Syria. Quirinius was



under orders to raise taxes and to take a census for the area. The High Priest opposed him, and He was succeeded by Ananus who kept his position until he was replaced in 15 A.D. by his son, Eleazar. He lasted about a year and was replaced by Caiaphas, son-in-law to Ananus, who managed to hold on to the office for 18 years (18-36 A.D.). At the same time, Augustus died (14 A.D.) and was followed by Tiberius Caesar (14-37 A.D.) who made Valerius Gratus prefect of Judea who ruled for eleven years (15 A.D.-26 A.D.). In 26 A.D., Tiberius replaced Gratus with the notorious Pontius Pilate (26-36 A.D.)

Palestine at the time of Christ's birth was divided into five districts: Galilee, Decapolis, Samaria, Judea, and Idumea. Herod was an Idumean; Christ was considered a Galilean.

The Roman capital and judicial headquarters for the region was at Caesarea Maritima near the Mediterranean Sea.

After Jesus' flight to Egypt, Mary and Joseph settled in the mountain village of Nazareth overlooking the lush Jezreel Valley located a few miles south east of Sepphoris, the northern Roman capital city. Pixner estimates the village to number about 120 to 150 people at the time of Christ (Pixner, 1992, p. 15).

### **THE TRADITIONAL TIMELINE**

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>2 or 3 B.C.</b> | <b>Birth of Jesus Christ</b> (December)                             |
| 1 B.C.             | January: Escape to Egypt. Slaughter of children at Bethlehem.       |
| 1 B.C.             | January 10—a total lunar eclipse.                                   |
| <b>1 B.C.</b>      | Herod died after the eclipse between January and April.             |
| 11 A.D.            | Jesus visits Jerusalem as a child.                                  |
| 14 AD*             | <b>Anchor date:</b> Tiberius becomes Caesar (August 19th).          |
| 25 A.D.            | Pilate & Caiaphas appointed to office.                              |
| 29 AD              | Ministry of John the Baptist begins.                                |
| <b>29 A.D.</b>     | <b>September-November: Christ's ministry begins.</b>                |
| 31 AD              | Tiberius executes Sejanus (Oct 18th).                               |
| <b>33 A.D.</b>     | <b>Jesus dies near Passover in April (Wed. or Thurs -- 3:00PM).</b> |
| 36 AD              | Pilate dethroned. Caiaphas deposed.                                 |
| 37 A.D.            | Tiberius Caesar dies.   |

The difficulty with setting the day of Christ's birth or death is the two-calendar system (Qumran's & the temple priests' system) in operation at the time of the Passover. The Qumran community greatly distrusted the priestly pattern and considered them corrupt and sloppy. The celibates developed their own calendar, which competed with the priestly calendar. It appears, therefore, that the Passover was a two-day event. Families kept the feast based on loyalty to the priestly caste or to the fastidious Qumran celibates.

This 2 B.C. date is consistent with the records of Matthew, Luke, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius.

### **THE TIME OF CHRIST'S BIRTH**

**As to the year of Christ's birth:** Since Tiberius came to power on August 19, 14 AD, and John starting baptizing in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of Tiberius (Luke 3:1), and since Jesus was about 30 years old when he entered his ministry, Jesus must have been baptized in the fall of 29 A.D.. Subtracting 30 years from 29 AD, I understand Jesus to be born between the fall of 2 B.C. and January of 1 B.C.

**As to the month of Christ's birth:** John the Baptist was born six months before Christ. We know that John was conceived shortly after his father, Zechariah, served in the temple during one of the courses of Abijah. There were 24 courses of priests that served for one week at a time twice a year. This would cover 48 of the 52 weeks of the year. All the priests were available during the major feasts of Israel (Passover, Pentecost, and the fall festivals) which covered the remaining four weeks. The courses began on the first of Nissan. The course of Abijah served on the eighth week. Since all priests served during Passover, the course of Abijah served nine or ten weeks after the first of Nissan. It was at this time, the angel appeared to Zechariah and announced to Zechariah the good news that Elizabeth was going to bear him their first child (Edersheim, 1971, p. 135-143). This means Zechariah served in late May or early June and that John was conceived in late May or early June of that year.

It is also possible that the angel appeared to John during the second course of Abijah or at one of Israel's major festivals. If John was conceived during June, he would have been born around March/April the following year. Since Christ was born six months after John, Jesus could have been born in September. Some think He was born on the Feast of Tabernacles. If the angel spoke to John during the second course or during one of the fall festivals, John would have been born in May or June. Christ could have been born in late December or early January.

*The traditional date for the birth of Christ from as early as Hippolytus (ca. A.D. 165-235) has been December 25th. In the Eastern Church January 6th was the date for not only Christ's birth, but also the arrival of the Magi on Christ's second birthday, His baptism in His twenty-ninth year, and the sign at Cana in His thirtieth year. However Chrysostom (A.D. 345-407) in 386 stated that December 25th is the correct date and hence it became the official date for Christ's birth in the Eastern Church (January 6th was still considered the day for the manifestations of the coming of the Magi, the baptism, and the sign at Can. (Hoehner, 1981, pp. 25-27.*

How it is possible Christ was born in late December?

| 1.  | Year   | Month                     | Event   | Reference |
|-----|--------|---------------------------|---|-----------|
| 2.  | 2 B.C. | September/October (early) | Zechariah's vision                                | Luke 1    |
| 3.  |        | October (mid-late)        | Elizabeth's conceives (1st Mo.)                   | Luke 1:23 |
| 4.  |        | November                  | 1st full month of pregnancy                       |           |
| 5.  |        | December                  |   |           |
| 6.  | 1 B.C. | January                   |   |           |
| 7.  |        | February (mid-late)       | Elizabeth's seclusion ends                        |           |
| 8.  |        | March                     | 5th month of pregnancy or 6th month from October. |           |
| 9.  |        |                           | Gabriel's announcement                            | Luke 1:26 |
| 10. |        | April (early)             |   |           |
| 11. |        | May                       | Mary's 1st full month of pregnancy                |           |

- |     |           |   |
|-----|-----------|---|
| 12. | June      |   |
| 13. | July      | John could have been born in June             |
| 14. | August    |   |
| 15. | September |   |
| 16. | October   |   |
| 17. | November  |   |
| 18. | December  | Christ born in late December or early January |
| 19. | January   |   |

If Elizabeth conceived between October 15<sup>th</sup> and October 30<sup>th</sup>, then her seclusion would have ended in mid to late February. Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she would carry the Christ child occurred in mid-March 2. B.C. or early April. This would place Christ's birth in late December 2 B.C. or before January 1 B.C. Herod's death occurred sometime after the January 10 eclipse of 1 B.C.

The main objection for the December date is the shepherds watching their flocks by night—in December”

**Hoekner** explains:

*The one objection raised for the winter date is the fact of the shepherds attending their flock in the night (Luke 2:8). Usually, it is noted, the sheep were taken into enclosures from November until March and were not in the fields at night. However, this is not conclusive evidence against December being the time of Christ's birth for the **following reasons**. First, it could have been a mild winter and hence the shepherds would have been outside with their sheep. Second, it is not at all certain that sheep were brought under cover during the winter months. Third, it is true that during the winter months the sheep were brought in from the wilderness. The Lukan narrative states that the shepherds were around Bethlehem (rather than the wilderness), thus indicating that the nativity was in the winter months. Finally, the Mishnah (Shekalim 7:4) implies that the sheep around Bethlehem were outside all year, and those that were worthy for the Passover offerings were in the fields thirty days before the feast, which would be as early as February, one of the coldest and rainiest months of the year. Therefore, a December date for the nativity is acceptable.*

*. . . The exact date of the birth of Christ is difficult to know with finality. However, a midwinter date is most likely. It is clear that Christ was born before Herod the Great's death and after the census. In looking at the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke one would need to conclude that Christ was born of Mary within a year or two of Herod's death. In looking to some of the other chronological notations in the Gospels, the evidence led to the conclusion that Christ was born in the winter of 5/4 B.C. Although the exact date of Christ's birth cannot be known, either December of 5 B.C., or January of 4 B.C. is most reasonable."*

## 18. WHY DECEMBER 25TH?

The birth of Christ is the most important event in history, as well as one of the most joyful holidays in Western tradition.

Some modern skeptics have questioned the date and proposed a September date for our Lord's birth.

Others have suggested that Christmas is the result of Christianizing Sol Invictus (birth of the unconquered Sun), a pagan festival.

What is the argument for the birth of Christ being on or around December 25th?

Consider the following Biblical facts:

The Annunciation of Mary took place during the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy (Luke 1:25-26). Overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, the Christ was conceived in her womb. Upon hearing the news, Mary visited Elizabeth in Judah and stayed with her three months (Luke 2:56). We think this visitation took place in late March or early April circa 2 B.C.

John the Baptist was conceived six months earlier than Mary's visit after his father, Zechariah had finished his service in the temple during the fall festivals. If we can determine the time Zechariah ministered in the temple, we can determine the time he went home to be with his wife Elizabeth. We understand John was conceived in September circa 3 BC.

Consider the Eastern Orthodox tradition: The churches in the East inform us that John the Baptist was conceived in September and born around June the next year (2.B.C.). If this be the case, then the Annunciation took place in March / April, three months before John was born. Based on a 40 week gestation period, these Eastern Orthodox Church propose the following dates:

- John's conception – September 23rd, count six months and we have
- Mary's Annunciation – March 25th, count three more months and we have,
- John's birth – June 24th . Count nine months from March 25th and we have
- The birth of Christ – December 25th

Since its ecclesiastical memorialization during the 4th century, both the East and West have celebrated the birth of the Savior on December 25th, and for good reason.

**The first argument for the December date is because of tradition.**

Saint John Chrysostom (347-407), Archbishop of Constantinople, had no doubt about the accuracy of December 25th being the birth date of our Lord.

He informs us that December 25th was chosen for the celebration of the Nativity because it was an ancient tradition in the West (Rome / Europe) and was received by the East in 376 AD. St. Chrysostom delivered the following Christmas sermon at Antioch on December 25th, 386 AD:

*“it is not ten years since this day [Christmas Day on December 25] was clearly known to us, but it has been familiar from the beginning to those who dwell in the West.” “The Romans who have celebrated it for a long time, and from ancient tradition, and have transmitted the knowledge of it to us.” (Addis WE, Arnold T. A Catholic Dictionary: Containing Some Account of the Doctrine, Discipline, Rites, Ceremonies, Councils, and Religious Orders of the Catholic Church. Benziger Brothers, 1893. Original from Columbia University, Digitized Sep 15, 2009, p. 178)*

We may take it as certain that the feast of Christ’s Nativity was kept in Rome on 25 December. It was introduced by St. John Chrysostom into Constantinople and definitively adopted in 395 (Thurston. H. Transcribed by Rick McCarty. Christian Calendar. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume III. Published 1908. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Nihil Obstat, November 1, 1908. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York).

**The hand of providence:** Acceptance of the December 25th date was adopted by all the churches without objection in the early years of the church.

**Antioch**, the homeland of **Chrysostom**, adopted this day with eagerness and celebrated the birth of Christ on December 25th.

**John of Nicaea** confirmed to the Catholics of Armenia that James the brother of Christ did not censure this celebration or the date of it.

**Cyril of Jerusalem**, in writing to Pope Julius (337-352), caused Julius to search out the matter. In reading Josephus, he discovered that Zechariah saw the Angel and was mute, and that John was conceived on 23rd of September, and that six months later the Theotokos received her announcement about the Lord; and that she gave birth to the Christ on the 25th of December.

**Basil the Great** (330-379) delivered his laudatory discourse on the Nativity of Christ on the 25th of December.

**Emperor Honorius of Rome** (393-423) showed his brother Arcadius in Constantinople that the Roman Christians celebrated the nativity of Christ with much enthusiasm on the 25th of December.

**Anastasius** the Roman (491-518), theophilus of Alexandria (385-412), and John of Jerusalem (356-417) celebrated the Lord’s birth on December 25th.

**St. Augustine of Hippo** (354-430), in his book On the Holy Trinity, states Christ was born on December 25th.

Chrysostom went on to say,

*“This festival hath been everywhere proclaimed so rapidly and hath grown to such a height. That which Gamaliel said concerning the preaching of the Apostles, I might confidently assert concerning this day; that because God the Word is of God, therefore it shall not only be overthrown, but every year be more widely observed and ore clearly known.” (Quoted by W.P. Ten Broeck)*

**The second argument for the December 25th date** rests on the fact that those in the early church had access to the records / archives in Rome and expressed no doubt about the accuracy of the date.

The December 25th date was celebrated first by those in Rome who had access to Roman archives, and they celebrated December 25th as our Lord's birth day without any objection or equivocation.

According to Luke 2:2 the birth of Jesus was at the time of "the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria" (3-2 BC). This taxing "census" or "enrollment" occurred precisely in keeping with Luke's chronology regarding the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ:

*"Tertullian (Against Marcion 4.19) states that the enrollment at the time of the birth of Jesus was 'taken in Judea by Sentius Saturninus,' and we remember that for Tertullian, as for many other early Christian scholars (§ 489), the date of the nativity was 3/2 B.C. Josephus (Ant. 17.89) refers to the time when Herod the Great had opportunity to speak about his son, Antipater, to Varus, and says: 'At this time there happened to be in Jerusalem Quintilius Varus, who had been sent to succeed Saturninus as governor of Syria.'"* (The Enrollment of Quirinius)

The birth of Christ as being on December 25th goes back to the archives in Rome.

Moreover, this argument rests on the presumption that mothers know with specificity when their children were born, and Mary is no exception! How could she forget anything? She must have told Luke, Paul, Peter, John, Matthew, and the other disciples the precise details of her unique pregnancy, angelic visitation, and her delivery at Bethlehem. That Jesus was born on December 25th must have been accepted in the first century without question.

Further, Dr. Luke received his details about the dates and circumstances of our Lord's birth and the birth of John the Baptist from Mary. This information spread rapidly through the churches in the first century before it received ecclesiastical ordination in the 4th century. And when our Lord's birth was memorialized on December 25th, it received immediate universal acceptance . . . because it conformed with what the churches around the Mediterranean had already asserted.

Theophilus (A.D. 115-181), Catholic bishop of Caesarea in Palestine:

*"We ought to celebrate the birthday of Our Lord on what day soever the 25th of December shall happen."* (Magdeburgenses, Cent. 2. c. 6. Hospinian, De origine Festorum Chirstianorum.)

**The third argument for the December 25th date** rests on the premise that Zechariah was acting as Deputy High Priest on the Day of Atonement in September that year and that John was conceived on or around September 23rd.

Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine, Ambrose, Theodoret, Dionysius the Areopagite, Venerable Bede, and Theophylact among others affirm Zechariah was acting as high priest on the Yom Kippur that year.

This view calculates the conception of John in October 3 BC, and Mary being pregnant visited Elizabeth when Elizabeth was six month pregnant; that is, sometime in late March or early April 2 BC. If this is the case, Mary would have given birth to Jesus around December 25, 2 BC.

The entire tradition of the church has acknowledged that Zechariah was the high priest in September.

The objection arises from some noting the text does not say Zechariah was the high priest, but only a priest (Luke 1:5). The answer is that it was common to call the high priest "the priest" as Leviticus 13:2

says of Aaron: “They must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons . . . “. The term “*priest*” and “*high priest*” were interchangeable titles. For other examples see Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7:15.

It is also clear that Zechariah was ministering inside the Holy Place when the angel appeared beside the altar of incense (Hebrews 9:4). Further, the people were concerned (overcome with anxiety) because Zechariah delayed in coming out of the temple (Luke 1:21).

Thus, it has been proposed that Zechariah could have “censed” in the Holy of Holies and as he returned into the Holy Place, the angel Gabriel met him which delayed his return to the people out of the Holy Place into the courtyard. That the people were anxious supports the view that Zechariah was performing sacred duties on the Day of Atonement that September. Jewish tradition informs us that prayers were shortened so as not to cause anxiety among the people.

*Mishna, Yoma 5:1: “He did not make the prayer long so as to frighten Israel.”*

So, when Zechariah did not return quickly, the people were naturally distressed about the delay speculating that he might have been slain by the Lord; and, there is this fact: That Zechariah came out of the temple mute must have left an indelible impression on everyone, especially Zechariah, Elizabeth . . . and later Mary.

We also know the priesthood had become a political matter. Tension arose between the people and Rome; between Jewish conservatives loyal to Torah, and the party of liberals loyal to the Roman State. In order to keep peace with Rome, Herod killed a rebel high priest and appointed his own political priest who would favor Roman occupation. As scholars examined the lists of high priests during this period, we know they were elected, selected, and chosen by lot each year between 3 BC and 6 AD. A priest for a year couldn’t attain too much political power.

Moreover, there is a good argument that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist because John was the true high priest of Israel in contrast to Caiaphas who was a political choice for high priest by Rome.

#### Objections to the December Date

However, this argument is not without objections. The objection arises out the fact that Zechariah was of the order of Abijah (a descendant of Eleazar, the son of Aaron) which served twice a year for one week at their appointed times; that is, the Luke reference could refer to his service earlier in the spring. It is true, that Zechariah did serve as a priest during these periods twice a year. But, Chrysostom inform us he was chosen by lot to serve on the Day of Atonement (a fall festival) as a deputy high priest, and that one of his duties was to burn incense on this day. If this be true, then John was conceived sometime in late September (23) or early October 3 BC.

Josef Heinrich Friedlieb argues it differently but comes to the same conclusion that Zechariah ministered during the Fall Festival saying the priestly course of Abias (the course of Saint Zacharias) was undoubtedly serving during the second week of the Jewish month of Tishri—the very week of the Day of Atonement on the tenth day of Tishri. In our calendar, the Day of Atonement would land anywhere from September 22 to October 8.

Some object to the December date of our Lord’s birth because shepherds were not active in the field during the winter season. But, there is an answer to this. First, this just isn’t true. Sheep need care all year round. Secondly, sheep were needed for the temple services, and it reasonable to think the priests secured

many of their mandatory sheep offerings from, in, and around Bethlehem which is only six miles away from Jerusalem . . . and during the winter season.

Some object to the December date because it was the rainy season in Israel. First, Bethlehem is not in Norway or Siberia. It is on the same latitude as northern Florida and Dallas, Texas. An average day in December will be 54 degrees—that is, perfect!

**Finally, Providence has given us December 25th as the day** to celebrate our Lord's birth as a blessing to the whole world.

This day has been a witness to Chinese, Japanese, Indians, and Africans that God-incarnate lived among us; that the kingdom of God invaded history in and through the birth of the Son. December 25th is sweet incense blessing the whole world with hope, love, and charity. It is a triumphant witness to the love of God that sent his Son into the world to save sinners.

Moreover, it is a human perversity to think that this great event was the product of haphazard guess work and sloppy scholarship among early Christians. Only a proud, arrogant modern man interested in advancing his own reputation would challenge this date twenty-centuries removed from those who had access to the early records and their deposition in the Roman archives. What a shame for a pastor to discourage Christians from celebrating the Lord's birth on December 25th being the Grinch that stole Christmas.

While it is not necessary to know the exact day of our Lord's birth, December 25th is a reasonable time to celebrate the greatest event in history.

Let us remember our Lord's birth on December 25th as the day the God-man entered history to show us the Father, and to save us from our sins.

### **ROMAN EMPERORS**

- Emperor Caesar Augustus (Octavian) 29 B.C. - 14 A.D.
- Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus 14-37 A.D.
- Gaius Caesar Augustus Germanicus (Caligula) 37-41 A.D.

## **19. CHRIST'S GENEALOGY**

### **The Genealogy of Christ from Matthew**

Two genealogies of Christ are recorded in Scripture. Matthew records Joseph's lineage, and Luke records Mary's lineage. The former reveals his kingly pedigree; the latter shows us his link to Adam and thus His humanity.



## PILLAR TWO: THE HISTORY OF CHRIST

The word “*Book*” comes from the Greek word *Biblos*, which means *book*, or *record*. Our word *Bible* comes from this word. The word “*generation*” comes from the Greek word *geneseos*, which means *beginnings*. Our word *genesis* comes from this word.

The word *Jesus* is a Latin word, which is translated from the Greek word *Ihsou* (Iesou). In Hebrew, “Jesus” is “Jeshua” or *Joshua*. *Jeshua* means “Jehovah is Salvation.” The shortened term *Jehoshua* is *Jeshua* or *Yeshua*. The stress on verb makes the meaning of *Jesus*, “He will save.” This is confirmed in Matthew 1:21, “He will save His people from their sins.”

Matthew traces Jesus’ line back through Solomon, David, and to Abraham.

Five Women are mentioned in the genealogy; making it not only *unique*, but a genealogy of grace. In Israel, men inherited their father’s name and status, and not their mother’s name.

- Tamar (Gentile): the family of Judah knew her for her loyalty. Through harlotry, she conceived an heir for the Messianic line.
- Rahab (Gentile): She was a former Canaanite who obtained deliverance by her faith.
- Ruth (Gentile): She was the faithful daughter-in-law of Naomi.
- Bathsheba (wife of Uriah): She was the mother of Solomon who received grace.
- Mary (Jewess): She was the mother of Jesus Christ.

**Names in the list:** There are six sets of seven names making a total of forty-two (42) names. There are three sets of fourteen names. This number, of course, intrigued the Jewish mind.

- 7 is the sum of 3 + 4.
- 7 x 7 equals 42. Jesus is the 42nd person mentioned in the list.
- 3 symbolize completeness. It has a beginning, middle, and an end. It represents the “fullness of God” (Numbers 6:24-26).
- 4 equals the “fullness of the earth” (Daniel 8:8)
- 7, therefore, is the number of perfection.
- 2 x 7 equals fullness or double perfection.
- 3 x 14 equals fullness or triple perfection. Jesus is the perfection of God.

The deeper meaning is that Jesus is fully God; that He completely fulfilled the Old Covenant; that He fully inaugurated the new covenant. Note the spiritual, moral, and historical progressions in the genealogy:

- **Beginnings:** Abraham to David A period of faith
- **Decline:** Solomon to Zedekiah (crisis) A period of hope

- **Eclipse:** Zerubbabel to Joseph A period of despair
- **Fulfillment:** Christ was born A period of love

**Note the prophetic dilemma:** God promised David that one of his descendants would sit upon his throne forever. But, as the integrity of David's descendants began to decline, God placed a curse on the lineage through Jeconiah. This is known as the **JECONIAH CURSE** (Jeremiah 36:30). Since Joseph was a descendent of Jeconiah, the curse fell on Joseph's descendants making it impossible for a biological son of his to sit on the throne. God, of course, had an historical, providential solution. Jesus was born of Mary, a physical descendent of Nathan and also a son of David. Because He was Mary's son, He was a legitimate biological son of David making it possible for God to fulfill His promise to David that one of his sons would sit upon his throne forever. Because Jesus was not a biological descendent of Joseph, He did not bear the curse. When Joseph married Mary, Jesus inherited the legal right to be king by virtue of adoption laws.

**Note the omissions in the genealogy:** Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, Jehoiakim. All of these men were wicked men and are not mentioned in the genealogy. From Zerubbabel to Joseph fourteen names are mentioned in Matthew. In the same time period, twenty-three names are mentioned in Luke. ***Matthew is more interested in links than precise data; in brevity than length; in Christology than genealogy.*** Public records were available for inspection in his day. Josephus obtained his genealogy from public records. Interesting, there is no known opposition to the facts contained in the genealogy of Christ.

### **The Genealogy of Christ from Luke 3:23-38**

The genealogy of Christ is a Miracle of History

***3:23 "And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli . . .***

Before Jesus is called the "son of Mary" or the "son of Joseph," He is first addressed as the Son of God -- "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (3:22).

The lineage in Luke called the *genealogy of Jesus* the (adopted) son of Joseph (Luke 3:23) – a legal fact-claim. It is **not** called "Mary's genealogy."

The phrase "*as was supposed*" (nomizo) refers to a custom, social practice, or legal tradition of the husband-child inheriting the genealogy of the mother.

A knowledge of Biblical customs combined with a little reasoning, scholars corrected concluded this is indeed the genealogy of Mary, the unpretentious female descendant of Nathan, the son of David.

In Biblical terms, sons were always called the son of their father, e.g. son of David or "Ben-David" rather than the son of their mother . . . and for good reasons. The Bible gives men the responsibility of rearing sons for the glory of God.

Luke, the physician and Christian historian, gained his knowledge of this lineage by interviewing Mary and her family on one or many of his visits to Jerusalem.

There are at least 75 names in Mary's genealogy, each with a history birth, life-struggle, and death. All were provided for by the Lord and protected from the touch of Israel's wicked kings and foreign kings

that ruled over them; from famines and feuds; from the sins of adultery and divorce; from spiritual compromise and political division.

According to the Protogospel of James (3rd century), Mary's parents were Joachim and Anne. But, this is uncertain as this work is pseudepigrapha writing. Ephiphanius the monk also traced Mary's lineage back to Joachim and Anne.

Mary was descended from David through his third son, Nathan the older brother of Solomon. Both were sons of Bathsheba. Nathan's name means "*gift of God*."

This makes Mary and Joseph distant cousins with lineages matched from Abraham to David. Their descendants including Jesus inherited the benefits and privileges of the lineage of both sets of parents.

Missing in this list is any reference to Eve, Sarah, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, Mary, or the wives of these men. Why? Was something wrong with Luke or is there something wrong with the mind of modern man?

Absent in this list is any hint of sin, transgressions, or iniquity; that is, Luke records none of their sins and weaknesses.

The Bible does not give any details about Mary's life because the miracle of Christmas is not about Mary, the daughter of Eve, but about Jesus, the Son of David, the Son of God.

There is no mention of the Jeconiah curse because Jeconiah was a descendant of Solomon and not Nathan – so, Mary and her ancestry escaped this affliction on the Messianic line. Mary, however, being a daughter of Adam did not escape the Adamic curse or inheriting his sin nature.

Luke records the miraculous conception of Jesus – that Jesus was conceived by the created work of the spirit and not by natural, nuptial conception. Since sin is passed on by the male and since He did not have a human father, Jesus escaped the Adamic curse. He had no sin; knew no sin; and did no sin.

While the conception of our Lord was miraculous, his birth was not. His birth, like any other child's birth, was natural; that is, it came with labor pains, blood, and water.

There is no Biblical evidence regarding the "Immaculate Conception" of Mary; i.e., that Mary herself was conceived without original sin. This was a later development in the church that lacked a Biblical foundation – a figment of the specious imaginations of church patricians – a devilish doctrine that has led naïve Christians to worship Mary as the "Theotokos" or "Mother of God." All "hail Marys" are offered based on this heresy.

Negatively, Biblical scholars reject doctrines of Mary being a deified Theotokos. Mary did not give birth to God because God was never born: "even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God" (Psalm 90:1-4). She is not the 4th person of the Trinity nor is she a mediator between God and man!

Mary gave birth to Christ who was the God-man, the Word made flesh (John 1:1, 14). While Christians ought not to worship Mary, believers should honor Mary for her role in bringing mankind the Christ child. She is a model of submission, purity, reverence, humility, and service. We do reject her deification by overzealous churchmen as it causes many to venerate Mary and not the Savior.

Christian tradition calls Mary the Virgin mother, Mother of God (Theotokos), Ever virgin, Immaculate, and Assumed into heaven, but a simple reference to her as the Virgin Mother or Virgin Mary is sufficient to communicate the miracle of our Lord's conception.

There is no evidence however and no spiritual reason to conclude Mary remained a virgin throughout life. Perpetual virginity is neither logical, virtuous, or necessary to uphold the purity and wonder of our Lord Jesus Christ. Reason causes us to assume that Mary and Joseph consummated their marriage after the birth of Christ after or before they went back to Nazareth.

### **Virginity as a Requirement in the Law**

Unlike modern secularists who view virginity as a vice, Virginity in the Messianic Nation was highly esteemed and held up as a virtue. A young woman had to remain pure just to stay alive as fornication was punishable by death (Deuteronomy 22).

The condition of being a "*virgin*" is mentioned 33 times in Scripture; and, the term virginity is used 9 times.

Virginity was **not** unique in Israel. All women married in this line were virgins until they got married.

Being a virgin was drilled into men and women in the Old Testament. No man wanting to start a family would consider marrying a woman that was not a virgin.

Women prided themselves of being pure on the day of their marriage.

Virginity was of supreme importance under the law. New brides had to have proof that they were virgins by retaining their marital cloth (Deuteronomy 22:13-21).

If a man married a woman that was not virgin, he challenged the father and brought her to court for judgment. Without proof of virginity, divorce was automatic; sometimes death followed.

If a woman was not a virgin, Scripture call her act "*folly*" (Nebalah) in Deuteronomy 22. The word "nebalah" is translated "carcasses" in Jeremiah 9:21 which the Spirit compares "to dung."

If a woman committed "*folly*" (nabalah) before marriage, she was to be stoned at the doorstep of her father's house – who, as a father, miserably failed to supervise his daughter.

If a man (or the descendants of David) married a woman that was not a virgin, he faced a stiff penalty (Deuteronomy 22:18–19).

If any woman in Nathan's line that was not a virgin, there was no assurance of a pure Davidic line. Virginity guaranteed a pure lineage from Nathan to Mary. Consequently, we correctly assume that all of Mary's mothers and grandmothers were virgins when they married; that is, Mary was a pure woman in a line of virgins.

Virginity was important in the New Testament. Moreover, fornicators could not enter the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

If any woman in Nathan's line that was not a virgin, there was no assurance of a pure Davidic line. The virginity laws in Israel guaranteed a pure lineage from Nathan to Mary.

## PILLAR TWO: THE HISTORY OF CHRIST

Therefore, we conclude that all of Mary's mothers and grandmothers were virgins when they married; that is, Mary was a pure woman in a line of pure women.

The only difference between her and her grandmothers was that she became pregnant while she was a virgin. In other words, it took a thousand years of history to produce the Holy Mother.

Mary, therefore, along with Joseph and Jesus were Nazarenes.

***Matthew 2:23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.***

Thus we conclude that Jesus received his human genes from Mary with 23 chromosomes (XY). But, where did the X chromosome come from?

Jesus was a man with XY chromosomes, the Y chromosome coming from Mary and the X chromosome coming from God – for God prepared a body for His Son in the likeness of human flesh (Romans 8:3; Hebrews 10:5) – for “she was found with child of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 1:18).

Luke's record informs us that Jesus was fully human with the exception of having a sin nature, and that He “grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40).

Unlike Matthew's genealogy which traces Joseph's genealogy back to Abraham, Luke traces Mary's genealogy back to Adam showing that Jesus was born a real man with 23 (XY) chromosomes – a man like us. A man without Adam's sinful nature; a God-man with a disposition like His Heavenly Father – a Miracle of God in history.

### **CHRONOLOGY OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST**

**Caesar Augustus** (30 B.C. – 14 A.D.): Augustus or Augustus was the Roman Emperor and various governors of Syria served under him: Quintilus Varus had authority over Judea sometime around 6-4 B.C. Quirinius, who was a military man, was given jurisdiction over Judea sometime following the administration of Varus and maintained jurisdiction over Judea until about 7 A.D.

**Tiberius Caesar** (14-37 A.D.): We can date the birth of Christ around December 2, B.C. The key pivotal date of the reign of Tiberius Caesar is generally assigned a beginning date around 14 A.D. If John the Baptist entered his ministry in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Tiberius, it would be very difficult to begin a date for Jesus' ministry before 29 A.D. For this reason, this research rejects a 4-6 B.C. date for the birth of Christ.

### **SCRIPTURES**

*Luke 2:1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)*

*Luke 3:1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (14-37 A.D.), Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea.*

*John 6:1 After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.*

## **KEY DATES**

- Tiberius Caesar succeeded Augustus Caesar on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 14A.D.
- Pontus Pilate was appointed governor of Judea from 26-36 A.D.
- Herod Antipas was tetrarch of the Galilee from 4BC/1BC to 39A.D.
- Philip Herod was tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis from c. 4BC/1BC-34A.D.
- Annas was High Priest from 6A.D.-15A.D. and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, was High Priest from 18A.D.-36 A.D., but Annas still wielded the power ([John 18:12-13](#)).

If the reign of Tiberius Caesar began in August 14 A.D., and since John the Baptist began his ministry 15 years later around August 29 A.D. Our Lord's ministry began six months later in the spring of 30 A.D. but, this depends on what dating system Luke used. If he used the ascension year as the first year, then John could have entered his ministry as early as 28 A.D.

**Alfred Edersheim** (1825-1889) says, "Our Lord was born before the death of Herod" (Edersheim, 1971, vol. II, p. 704).

**Hendrickson** makes the following observations about the time and birth of Christ (William W. Hendrickson, 1987):

*Jesus was baptized at age 30 a few months before he attended the first Passover (30 A.D.):  
(Jesus died on the 4<sup>th</sup> Passover in 33 A.D.)*

***John 2:13 And the Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.***

***John 2:20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?***

- Jesus attended the Passover and cleansed the temple (John 2:20). The opposition made a statement that the temple was 46 years in the making.
- Josephus said the temple began around 19 B.C.
- 19 B.C. + 46 years = 27 A.D. (April) Therefore, we can deduct that Jesus entered his ministry sometime between 27 A.D. and 29 A.D.
- Dr. Luke (Luke 3:23) tells us that at the time of Jesus' baptism, Jesus was about 30 years old. If Jesus entered his ministry in the fall of 29 A.D., then Jesus was born circa late 2 B.C. or early 1 B.C.
- 29 A.D. - 30 year = circa December 2 B.C.
- Herod's death occurred between January and April in the year 1 B.C. Some place Jesus' birth around 4-6 B.C., but that seems difficult to reconcile with the time references related to the reign of Tiberius.

Therefore, we can deduct from these figures that Jesus was born between December 2, 2 B.C. and January 1 B.C. By the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Eastern Church had already developed a tradition of celebrating our Lord's

birth on December 25<sup>th</sup>, and the 6<sup>th</sup> of January as the day of celebrating the visit of the Magi in Jerusalem (a.k.a. Epiphany).

Many chronologists place Jesus' birth around 4 B.C. More recent students have attempted to place the birth of Christ in September/October because it coincides nicely with the Feast of Tabernacles (Yom Kippur) but these same people generally have a strong Jewish / Talmudic element in the church. It is difficult to speak with absolute certainty about the date of His birth, but it is **not** difficult to speak with certainty about the historicity of his birth<sup>14</sup>.

The records of Matthew, Luke, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius are consistent with the 2 B.C. date. .

**Christmas:** There are powerful secular forces combined with Judaistic trends to de-emphasize Christmas; the former out of a motive to secularize American and the latter out of dispute about the day Christ was born or with nitpicky grumpiness about Christmas being a pagan holiday. Regardless of the exact “day” Christ was born, His birth and subsequent life is the most important event in history. And, it is certainly correct to date history from His birth. Christian celebration of His birth provides an opportunity for believers to publish the Christ-event to the world. As to Christmas being a “pagan holiday,” Christianity has always been redemptive; that is, re-claiming pagan events and customs for the glory of God. No doubt, pagans had their rituals at the winter solstice. Christianity redeemed these days and assigned new meaning to them for the glory of God—and this is what redemption does. It preaches Christ and turns pagans into Christians, and replaces pagan customs with Christian practices. And, this is healthy and wholesome. So, don't let the spirit of a theological Grinch with a heart two sizes too small to take the joy out of your Christmas.

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<sup>14</sup> “Testimony supporting the year of Jesus' birth as 3/2BC is also found in the writings of the early Church Fathers. In approximately the year 200 AD, St. Clement of Alexandria (150-215AD), head of the Christian catechetical school in Alexandria, Egypt, recorded that Jesus of Nazareth was born in the twenty-eighth year of the reign of the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus. St. Clement was calculating the beginning of Augustus' reign from the year 727 AUC (a dating system from the foundation of the city of Rome), or in our time, 27 BC when the Roman Senate conferred upon him the title "Augustus." St. Clement's calculation gives the date 3 BC for Jesus' birth (*Christianity and the Roman Empire: Background Texts*, Ralph Novak, page 282). St. Clement's calculation was supported by St. Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea Maritima in the Holy Land, and was recorded in Bishop Eusebius' *Church History* written in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD (*Church History*, V).”

“Concerning the month and day of Jesus' birth, St. Clement reported that diverse opinions existed on the identification of both the month and day of the Savior's birth. Some biblical chronologists dated Jesus' birth to April 19<sup>th</sup>, some May 30<sup>th</sup>, and St. Clement assigned Jesus' birth to November 17, in what would be in our calendar year 3BC. The Eastern Rite Church Fathers had a long tradition of celebrating the Nativity on January 6<sup>th</sup>, but there were also other Fathers of the Church who favored December the 25<sup>th</sup>, and this date became the official celebration of the Nativity of the Savior in the Roman Catholic Church

There is firm documentary evidence that the birth of the Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Savior, was being celebrated in Rome as a Christ Mass on December the 25<sup>th</sup> by the year 336AD. The Eastern Church kept January 6<sup>th</sup> as the celebration of the birth of Christ until the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and then joined in the observance of the December 25<sup>th</sup> date, agreeing to celebrate January 6<sup>th</sup> as the adoration of the Magi. But where and how did the Catholic Church in Rome, guided by St. Peter's successor, settle on December 25<sup>th</sup> as the day the Savior's birth? Successive attacks on the city of Rome by barbarian armies in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD have destroyed any documentation that may have existed, but there may be a way to determine how the date of December 25<sup>th</sup> came to be the celebrated as the anniversary of the birth of the Savior.”

Quoted from Agape Bible Study, Dating the Birth of Jesus of Nazareth at  
<http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/documents/Dating%20the%20Birth%20of%20Jesus%20of%20Nazareth.htm>

## 20. THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

Jesus began his public ministry in the “*fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar*,” that is, in the fall of 29 A.D. sometime after August (Luke 3:1-3). John would be 30 years old, and within a few months, he would baptize Jesus.

- Tiberius Caesar succeeded Augustus Caesar on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 14 A.D.
- Pontus Pilate was appointed governor of Judea from 26-36 A.D.
- Herod Antipas was tetrarch of the Galilee from 4BC/1BC to 39AD.
- Philip Herod was tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis from c. 4B.C./1B.C.-34A.D.
- Annas was High Priest from 6A.D.-15A.D. and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, was High Priest from 18A.D.-36A.D., but Annas still wielded the power (John 18:12-13).

John baptized in the regions around the Jordan because there was much water in the area. Bargil Pixner says the first was near Jericho where “*Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind*” (2 Kings 2:11-12); the second was near Aenon near Salim (John 3:23) which was located south of Bet-Shean near Hehola, where Elijah “*threw his cloak around*” Elisha (1 Kings 16:19); the third was near Nahal Kerit which in Hellenistic times was called Yarmuk, the Holy Ravine. Near here a raven fed Elijah (1 Kings 17:3).

According to **Pixner**, a Benedictine monk in Jerusalem’s Domition Abbey and author of With Jesus Through Galilee: According to the Fifth Gospel, John was baptizing in the far northern regions of the Jordan River in the territory of Bashan, later called Batanea. It was at Bethany that many Jews settled for tax free purposes. It was a guard station set up to prevent bandits from robbing caravans of travelers. For this reason, many soldiers were baptized by John. Possibly, Jesus stayed with some relatives at Kochaba, a half-day journey from Bethsaida (John 1:38ff). (Pixner, 1992, p. 20, 21),

*Acts 10:38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*

There were at least three types of baptisms in the New Testament era: **the Mikvah**, the practice of ritual purity whereby one would immerse himself as practiced by the Essenes; **John’s baptism**, the sign of accepting the Messianic era; and **Christian baptism**, the sign of having come under the blessing of the Spirit due to the acceptance of the rule of God in one’s life. Christ was baptized by John in support of and as a testimony of the need for all Israelites to repent and prepare themselves for the Messianic Age wherein the fire of judgment would fall on the unrepentant and the blessing of redemption would rest on the repentant (Matthew 3:1ff).

## 21. THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST



## **CHRIST'S MINISTRY BY THE YEAR**

### **YEAR ONE**

**(Fall of 29 A.D. to the fall of 30 A.D.): John introduces Jesus - 4 months (John 1:19ff)**

*John 1:26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

**Early Judean Ministry (8 months & First Passover):**

*Mark 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.*

### **YEAR TWO**

**(Fall of 30- Fall of 31 A.D.):**

**Early Galilean (4 months); Jesus returns to Galilee,**

*John 4:1 When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.*

Herod Antipas arrested John and detains him in jail.

**Middle Galilean (10 months): Jesus ordains the twelve.**

*Luke 6:12 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray... And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.*

### **YEAR THREE**

**(Fall of 31 A.D. to the fall of 32 A.D.):**

**Later Galilean Ministry (6 month): Jesus goes to Tyre and Sidon.**

*Matthew 15:21 Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.*

*Matthew 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*

**Later Judean Ministry (3 months)**

*John 7:10 But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.*

**Perean Ministry (3 months)**

*John 10:40 And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode. See also Luke 13:31-32.*

## **YEAR FOUR**

**(Fall of 32 A.D. to the spring of 33 A.D.)**

### **Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (4<sup>th</sup> Passover)**

*Matthew 21:1 And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples.*

The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ took place in the spring of 33 A.D. According to NASA the date of Jesus Christ's death is believed to be Friday, April 3, 33 AD. But, Christ did not die on Friday. He died on Wednesday. If NASA is accurate in their calculations, then Christ died April 1, 33 A.D.

The ministry of Christ is worthy of more commentary than the limited purpose of this manual. And so, we only have this brief comment: Of all the lives that have ever been lived, none are so intriguing as the life and ministry of the Savior. It began with his hometown people attempting to throw him over a cliff at Nazareth and ended with his brethren sentencing him to death on a cross. He injured no man and could not be accused of avarice. His teaching has captured the minds and hearts of men—great and small. His precepts have produced civility and honesty among men and nobility and sobriety among kings. His miracles, of course, were His credentials. They demonstrated that the Creator was among men healing bodies, winning souls, calming storms, and conquering death.

The four gospels show different facets of God's Diamond among rocks:

- Matthew shows Christ as King of Israel.
- Mark shows Christ as the Servant of the Lord.
- Luke shows Christ as the perfect man.
- John shows Christ as God tabernacling among men.

For a detail study of Christ's life and ministry, one would do well to walk through the garden planted by the gospel writers.

## **22. THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST**

***Text: Matthew 4:1-11***

### **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

**The Initiator:** By Divine initiative: "*Led by the Spirit . . .*" The Spirit chose the place, the reason, the timing of the testing. The Tempter chose the hour and nature of temptation.

**Two reasons for testing:** To reveal the quality of a thing, or to destroy the quality of a thing.

**Two issues surrounding the temptation of Christ:** Was it to prove He did not sin, or to prove that He could not sin? One is an affront on his deity and the other on His humanity.

**Two sources of temptation:** within and without. James speaks, "But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire he is dragged away and enticed." Sins without come from outside a man; sins within are those that arise within the man himself.

**Two orders:** Matthew's account presents the historical order; Luke presents the moral order of the temptation:

**The Triple Assault:** the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

**Timing:** After a great victory and affirmation He was announced as the beloved Son at His baptism.

**Circumstance:** Only God can see and judge when we are alone. A monastic life is no solution to escape temptation. Christ proved faithful when only God could see and judge.

**Location:** In the wilderness, on the temple, on a high mountain.

**Two Headships tested:** Adam and Christ. Adam was tested in the garden without pressure and failed; Christ was tested in the wilderness under pressure and passed the test. Adam ate the forbidden fruit; Christ rejected the Devil's offer.

## **TEMPTATION ONE**

*"Since you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."*

The "if" plus the present tense indicative makes this a first class conditional clause meaning "Since you are the Son of God . . ."

Who can even imagine the gnawing hunger that cried out for satisfaction? Would Christ resort to his own creative powers to satisfy His cravings, or rely upon God's provision and God's timing to satisfy his hunger? Would He find comfort in the plan of God or the pleasures of men? Would He obey His Father or His hunger? This tested Christ's desire to enjoy things. This was an appeal to the "lust of the flesh" -- a physical temptation to test if the body was under the control of the Spirit. Would he seek to satisfy a legitimate appetite by illegitimate means? The most difficult part of the spiritual life is to surrender our appetites to God. The history is replete with men adopting spiritual disciplines, but retaining sovereignty over their own desires.

**The objection of Christ:** "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

Christ's only weapon was the Word of God. We have here a lesson on the sufficiency of Scripture. He did not follow his feeling, but the Word of God. Because He would rather die in the will of Father than live outside the Word of God, Satan's tactic failed.

*The word of God is our sword, and faith in that word is our shield (Matthew Henry).*

## **TEMPTATION TWO**

***"All this will I give you, if you bow down and worship me."***

Satan probably showed him the fertile valley of the Jordan and all its orchards near Jericho—the oasis of the desert, the retreat of kings. This tested His desire to possess and control things. It invoked one's desire for power and dominion and control; to rule from the top down. It appealed to "the lust of the eyes" and tested His spiritual ambitions. Would a world be won without a cross in order to achieve Adam's dominion mandate? Would He seek to obtain a lawful endowment by an unlawful means?

**The objection of Christ:** "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shall thou serve."

There is only one God and one absolute law. Our Lord committed to serve His Father, not man: His Father, not His own ambition. Imagine one man on earth totally committed to Divine law without reserve, without regret, and without retreat!

### **TEMPTATION THREE**

***"Since you are the Son of God, throw yourself down . . . "***

The place of this test was the pinnacle of the temple (S.E. corner). Why would this be a temptation? Very few of us are ever tempted to jump off skyscrapers. And, I doubt seriously if Christ was tempted to grandstand so He could boast of some superhuman achievement. Skydiving off the temple was a temptation because Christ longed for proof that God cared for Him: "Is God for me, or not" (Ex. 17:7)? Hungry and weak, even the best of men will doubt God's love. A sign that God cared would go a long way in bolstering confidence God was for him in His hour of deprivation. God's will was difficult. It hurt. Would Jesus demand God act immediately and prove His love, or would He be content to trust His love under great stress?

This tested the means of Messianic presentation -- the desire to achieve things. This was an appeal to discover "the pride of life"—and, pride has many faces. Pride demands God serve man. Pride wants to be sovereign. Pride demands God pamper self, me, and my. This was a mental a temptation -- a demand God prove His love by fulfilling a promise to protect Him. Would He claim God's promises by doing what God had not commanded? There is no command in the Bible to jump off skyscrapers. God does not call men to disobey natural law. Would Jesus seek the right ends by the wrong means? Satan even quoted the Word of God. Would Jesus be presumptuous and self-willed or would He limit His ambition to the difficult will of God? Would He pursue what men honor and applaud (self-achievement, the self-made man), or pursue what God honors and admires (self-restraint in suffering under the will of God)?

**The objection of Christ:** drawing His sword out of His sheath, Jesus launched a thrust, "*Thou (singular) shall not tempt the Lord thy God. . .*" This test makes God prove Himself by being irresponsible in order to prove His responsibility; i.e. by being unfaithful one seeks to prove His faithfulness; by sinning one seeks to test His forgiveness; by breaking natural law, one seeks to prove His promises. This was an attempt to control God rather than be controlled by Him. There is no protection for presumption. Kings and governments are always overreaching. Administrations can't resist grabs for power. In saying, "thou shalt not test the Lord thy God," Jesus revealed that He was humbly surrendered to natural law, to the limitations of man, and to the deprivations the Father placed on Him.

***"Ye shall not tempt the Lord"***

*Ye shall not provoke him by entertaining doubts of his mercy, goodness, providence, and truth (Clark).*

Following His temptation and having passed the test, the Father sent His angels to minister to His Son where a feast was prepared for Him. Exiting the temptation, Jesus was “*filled with the Spirit*.”

Passing tests increases spiritual power. Jesus headed north to Cana of Galilee. This is when He performed His first miracle of turning water into wine. He did not use His creative powers to satisfy His own needs, but He would use His power to provide luxuries for others. Shortly, thereafter, he went to the Passover Feast in Jerusalem (spring of 29 A.D.). In Judea, possibly at the Jordan, Jesus’ disciples baptized people. When the news arrived to the Pharisees, He left Judea and headed north into Galilee again passing by the way of Samaria (John 4). Once in Galilee, Capernaum became the headquarters of Jesus ministry.

## **23. THE TRIAL OF CHRIST**

### **THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS**

- The Last Supper which started about 6:30 on Tuesday night (John 13).
- The “abiding in the vine” message to the disciples (John 15).
- The soul-agony of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane late at night.
- The arrest in the garden probably before midnight.
- The all night trial before Annas and Caiaphas.
- The appearance before Pilate early Wednesday morning (6:00 AM).
- The appearance before early Wednesday morning before Herod (7:00 AM).
- The trial before Pilate (8:00 AM)
- Jesus crucified on Wednesday morning (9:00 AM)

### **THE LAWS OF THE SANHEDRIN**

Jews prided themselves on their sense of justice and jurisprudence predicated on Deuteronomy 16:6-9, 18-2. Judges and witnesses had to have clean hands. The bottom line of Sanhedrin law was fairness and justice or what we call “due process.” The Sanhedrin prided itself in the justice of its system. Their axiom according to Dr. Ginsburg was to save life, not destroy it. Because of their respect of life, they were eager to clear those arraigned into court. Therefore, the following code was established to guide the council with justice:

- No trial could take place at night lest the faculties of reason become blurred in the administration of justice.

## PILLAR TWO: THE HISTORY OF CHRIST

- No man could be tried and condemned in his absence.
- The president, at the outset of the trial, would admonish witnesses to tell the truth and reflect upon the preciousness of life and the cause of justice. The indictment had to be read before the accused and the council.
- Witnesses had to agree on the principal facts. In the event of disagreement, the case had to be dismissed with prejudice.
- Once an member expressed favor towards the defendant, he could not reverse his vote or stance during the debate.
- Votes began with the youngest members lest they be persuaded by the decisions of older members.
- Capital offences required a majority of at least two-thirds to condemn the accused.
- In capital offences a verdict could not be given the same day as the trial. 24 hours was given to reflect upon the evidence presented.
- Members assembled the following day to examine the evidence to see if anything of substance had been lost or perverted.
- If the accused had anything else to offer in his favor, they were obliged to listen.
- The Court could not confiscate the property of the accused. It was given back to the family.
- If a witness lied, then the penalty pending for the defendant was automatically administered to the one guilty of perjury.
- The accused could not be convicted on his testimony alone. He was allowed to call his own witnesses and if this was not allowed he was certainly misrepresented
- In a capital case, at least two sessions were required at least separated by at least 24 hours.
- The trial could not happen on a Sabbath or Jewish festival. (Wilson, 1970; Wingo, 1954; Zeitlin, 1964)

### **LEGAL VIOLATIONS**

Under Biblical law, this was a capital trial, but the person (Caiaphas) committing the capital offense was not on trial.

- Illegal arrests
- Illegal private examination
- Defective indictment
- Defective warrant
- No crime; no injury; no jurisdiction

## PILLAR TWO: THE HISTORY OF CHRIST

- Unauthorized night proceedings
- Deficient Cause of Action
- Defective witnesses: Under Biblical law, a false witness was to receive the penalty of the accused. In this case, the witnesses should have been crucified.
- No counsel for the accused
- Denial of witnesses in favor of the accused
- Uncorroborated alleged confession; i.e. under Biblical law a man could not be condemned based on his own confession.
- Unauthorized scheduled hearing
- Denial of due process rights
- Irregular proceedings
- Unanimous verdict
- Grace period disallowed
- Unlawful renting of clothes—a capital offense.
- Irregular balloting

The trial was concluded by a judge that was disqualified to conduct the proceedings. This was illegal under the Mosaic code. If a high priest intentionally tore his clothing, he was automatically disqualified as high priest and was to receive the death penalty (Leviticus 10:6, 21:10).

### **TWO MAJOR TRIALS**

The Jews were occupied people living under the jurisdiction of a Roman prefect. They lost the right to judge capital cases. In order to execute Christ, they had to sell the Romans on the need and urgency of the matter.

**The Jewish Trial:** **Annas** (the retired High Priest) and **Caiaphas**, the acting High Priest, assembled the Sanhedrin sometime after midnight. Members were coming in at all hours of the night and were scrambling to try and comprehend the strange proceedings occurring at night, the accusations, and the contradictions. Nothing made sense but nothing does with a lynch mob mentality prevailing. There were no causes of action, no injury, no damage to property, no affidavits of injury, no warrants, no due process, no laws broken laws, no proof presented, no defense attorneys, no court reporters. The Sanhedrin acted as judge, jury, accuser, and “triers of fact” — what facts? It didn’t matter. Lawlessness prevailed.

**The Roman Trial** held before Pilate, governor of Judea at Fortress Antonio.

**Roman law** developed over a period of one thousand years from the publication of the XII Tables in 451-50 B.C. to Emperor Justinian's codification in A.D. 529-34. We well know Roman law for Roman law

was used in trials in Rome—law that was required to be consistently applied the same way in all the provinces. And because of this we can know that the Roman trial of Jesus before Pilate was illegal in several instances:

- **Private citizens** presented the charges and prosecuted the case, not public officials as was done in the case of Jesus by the priests. Even though the Sanhedrin had already conducted a trial, their death sentence required a trial de novo by Rome - and private citizens must initiate it and prosecute it.
- If there was more than one accuser, a preliminary hearing must be held to decide which one should prosecute the case.
- This preliminary hearing must be an entirely private one hearing with the defendant and the prosecutors and those testifying alone being present.
- Only after this hearing could the several prosecutors frame an indictment.
- And it was only after this hearing that the indictment could be presented to the judge.
- It was only now that the trial date could be appointed and fixed on the legal calendar of coming events.
- When the day of the trial actually came the judges as well as the jurors were summoned by heralds.
- Now the impaneling of the jury began. This was done in this way: The names of a number of citizens were written on clay tablets and deposited in an urn or clay bowl. Then the number required was drawn out.
- Only in the Forum, or Roman courtroom, could the trial be conducted. In this legislative hall seats were placed for the judges.
- Decisions were arrived at by balloting and this was done as black (condemnation) stones or white (acquittal) stones were deposited in an urn as it was passed amongst them. (White, 1963; Kolbert, 1979; Wolff, 1976).

All of these Roman laws were violated. At first, Pilate attempted to pawn the nasty job off to Herod. The Jews accused Jesus of treason to Caesar—for being a tax protester out of pretense of loyalty to Caesar—an accusation Pilate knew was false. Every Jew in Israel secretly protested taxes. But, the accusation that Jesus was some kind of King had to be examined (Luke 23:2). According to Luke, Pilate sent Jesus to Antipas as a result of the Jews noting that Jesus had stirred up the people “from Galilee even to this place” (Luke 23:5). Under Roman law a trial was to be held in the province where the alleged misdeed took place. Jurisdiction was the first issue in Roman law. Jesus’ refusal to answer questions embarrassed Antipas which led to a beating for contempt of court.

When the forum returned from **the mock trial of Herod**, Pilate was forced into the duty of judgment. During the whole process, Jesus remained relatively silent—to speak was to grant jurisdiction to the judge and to accept the charges of his accusers . . . but to remain totally silent was to acquiesce to the accusations. Pilate was stunned by Jesus’ collected, reasonable answers. “I find in Him no fault at all” was in Roman law a judgment of acquittal, judicially pronounced, and irreversible except by a higher power upon appeal; and it was the duty of Pilate thereupon to have discharged Him. It was a rule of



Roman law that "no man shall be put twice in jeopardy." This principle of double jeopardy is an important one even in modern law. A man cannot be tried in a court of law twice on the same charge. Knowing Christ was innocent, Pilate did everything he could to release Jesus. He even followed the Jewish rite of washing of hands to declare the man innocent (Deuteronomy 21:6-9). Unable to achieve dismissal of the case with the mob, Pilate capitulated to injustice and gave the court order for the executioners to crucify Jesus. (Edersheim, 1971).

## 24. THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

### MARRED MORE THAN ANY MAN

*Isaiah 52:14 . . . his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness . . .*

The cross is the most sacred symbol of the church, and yet it is a strange paradox. On one hand, it is the symbol of man's inhumanity to man as the cruelest instrument of execution ever conceived in the minds of wicked men. On the other hand, the cross is a symbol of God's love for man and the power of salvation. Wherever men understand the meaning of the cross, civility and charity reign. The cross is a confluence of love and hate, of life and death, of justice and mercy, of heaven and hell. History is centered around it. Theology is built on it. All Christian service must be done in light of it. How can we understand crucifixion better?

### THE AGONY OF CRUCIFIXION

**The crucifixion was shrouded with intense psychological suffering.** The sheer anticipation of crucifixion would induce shock for most men. Pressed in by the prescience of the cross in the Garden of Gethsemane (meaning: "the oil press"), a vault-like gloom settled over Christ's soul. When a person faces danger epinephrine is released into the blood stream, the heart begins to race, major arteries dilate, capillaries constrict, and blood pressure rises. So intense was Christ's agony, that He sweat great drops of blood, a phenomenon known as *hemadrosic* or *blood sweat*. So vivid was the agony of redemption that Jesus almost died on the spot. An angel was sent to strengthen Him. There existed a possibility that Christ's body might not hold up under God's master plan of redemption (Luke 22:43).

**The crucifixion was sometimes introduced with a flogging.** Jesus' crucifixion was preceded by a sleepless night where He was forced to stand on his feet. This was followed by three mock trials (Sanhedrin, Herod, & Pilate), abuse by slapping, spitting, and punches with a closed fist. In an effort to appease the riotous mob, Pilot ordered Christ flogged. Ciscero called it "the intermediate death." For this reason the Jews forbid any flogging beyond 40 lashes. But, the Romans possessed no such restrictions and felt at liberty to beat a man within an inch of his life. The instrument for this torture was the *flagellum*, a short whip with pieces of steel or bone protruding from the ends of leather strap. Each blow would cut, bruise, and rip the epidermis. The sliced subcutaneous tissue on the back made a torso look like shredded wheat. Blood oozed from the capillaries and deep bone bruises stunned the body with excruciating pain.

Additional blows with the hand or reeds would send the crown of two inch thorns deeper into Christ's scalp. Blood poured down the face of God's silent Lamb.

**Crucifixion was preceded by an agonizing death march.** When Roman generals conquered their enemies, they would march their prisoners to Rome. There, the generals would parade the defeated naked through the streets and crucify them as a form of entertainment and as a statement of domination.

Christ's death march was also dreary and humiliating. On His bleeding shoulders was placed the *patibulum*, the 125 pound cross piece which He dragged about 200 yards outside the city. With every step the splintery cross gouged His shoulders and rubbed them raw. Too weak to carry the *patibulum*, a foreigner named Simon was commandeered to help carry the Savior's cross. At the front of the procession a soldier rammed his way through the crowds on the *via delorosa* bearing the *titulus*, a statement of the crime for which He was condemned, "King of the Jews."

**Crucifixion was a death by impalation.** In a cold sweat, Jesus arrived at Golgotha, the hill of execution. The victim was usually stripped naked, but in the case of Jews, the indicted was sometimes allowed the dignity of wearing a loincloth. The soldiers tripped Jesus to the ground, back down, and arms still tied to the *patibulum*. Soldiers pinned His arms to the beam with their knees and hands. Weakened by the scourging, a man had little energy to resist this aggression. As the willing Lamb of God, the Savior offered no resistance. The executioner felt the indentation in the wrist and plunged a six-inch spike through the hand with a single blow. The steel spikes dislocated the carpal bones, but did not break them. The median nerve was touched, but not severed. Lightning like pain flashed across the limbs of his body: "As a sheep before his sheers is dumb, so Jesus opened not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

With the body anchored to the *patibulum*, four soldiers lifted it into place near the top of the 7-foot stake. Another tidal wave of pain electrified the brain as the spikes held the total weight of the body to the cross. Grabbing the feet, which hung about a foot off the ground, and bending the knees of the victim, the executioner placed the spike in the region of the metatarsal (foot) bones. One swing of the hammer completed the grisly job. Impaled on a stake, crucifixion was accomplished. A slow, painful death stalked its victim.

**Crucifixion was a death by starvation and dehydration.** Depending on one's constitution, it took 3 or 4 days to die on a cross. During the ordeal, the dammed would receive nothing but a stupefying beverage to dull his senses. Bleeding, sweating, and urinating would deplete the body of precious fluids. The Sun's blistering heat and the body's fever intensified the demand for liquid. Without water, high temperatures shocked the sensitive brain tissues causing the body to wrangle with convulsions.

**Crucifixion was a death by exposure.** The technical term for this cause of death is "hypothermia," a condition where the body temperature drops and the vital organs malfunction. During the day ultraviolet rays of the sun baked the skin creating huge blisters. First and second degree burns welt over the rounded parts of the body. At night chilly breezes numbed the skin and robbed the body of calories needed to maintain the functions of vital organs.

**Crucifixion was a death by tetanus poisoning.** White blood cells rush to the punctures and lacerations on the body. Fibrinogen, a coagulant that collects platelets and red and white blood cells, rush to the wounds to form a protective scab over the injury. But the vast wounds of crucifixion rescind the possibility of healing.

Dirt, gravel, and dust invade the exposed tissues. Flies buzz around the stench of blood, sweat, and dirt. A deadly bacteria known as "anaerobic bacillus," a bacteria that lives in the stomach of cows, barnyards, and topsoil, rapidly multiplies in the punctures and cuts of the body. The bacteria release lethal toxins that poison the nerves and other bodily tissues. Tetanus sets in. Gangrene forms. Nerves are damaged and muscles contort with spasms and convulsions. Severe headaches, fever, cramping muscles, and lockjaw seize the victim. The heart races. Breathing is difficult. Oxygen debt makes impossible demands on the lungs.

**Crucifixion was a death by suffocation and asphyxiation.** In order to breath, a man pushed up on the spike through His feet to gasp a breath of air. Pain pierced the metatarsal region of the feet. As His body sank back down and was suspended by the spikes in His wrists, waves of pain shocked the brain. Over and over, the cycle was repeated.

As bacterial armies invade the body, the muscles contort and spasm. When the quadriceps yields to exhaustion and nerve damage, the body is no longer able to push up for air. The pounding, poisoned heart ruptures in its race to supply the body with oxygen. Unable to inhale or exhale the lungs fill with carbon dioxide and death occurs.

**Crucifixion was sometimes a death by crucifracture.** Because it took anywhere between 36 to 90 hours for an impaled victim to die, soldiers could hurry the process along by striking the tibia bone with an ax. A compound fracture rendered the legs of the victim useless and disabled the ability of the crucified to breath. Death was almost instantaneous. The two thieves at the side of Christ died in this manner. However, our Lord did not die by crucifracture, or tetanus poisoning, or by exposure. The Scripture predicted "none of his bones would be broken" (Psalm 34:20).

Jesus was not the only victim of crucifixion. Many a man met his death on a cross. Yet the Scripture says His visage was marred more than any man. How can that be? What did Christ experience on the cross that other victims did not?

**With Christ, crucifixion was a death by divine wrath.** Two types of affliction met the Savior at the cross. One by man; the other by a holy God. From 9:00 in the morning till 12:00 noon, Jesus suffered at the hands of man. It was during this time frame that the Lord spoke His noble words: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

But at the sixth hour, 12:00 noon, a strange, moribund darkness blanketed the Earth. The Judge of all mankind released the fury of His wrath on the Lamb. For three hours the Sun refused to shine. In Egypt, Diogenes exclaimed that, "Either Deity Himself suffers, or He is sympathizing with one who does."

At that time, the Judge laid the sins of the world on the shoulders of the Lamb. So complete was this transfer of guilt that the Scripture declares, "He became sin for us . . ." (2 Corinthians 5:21). All that was evil, all that was wicked, and all that offended a holy God was imputed to the body of the Lamb. Like a surge of a thousand mega volts or electricity, Divine wrath electrified every cell in the body of Christ.

Physical death would have been a sweet escape, a coveted exit, but the Savior chose to remain on the cross until redemption was complete. As time stood still, Christ summoned all his strength to live on and feel the anguish and absorb the full brunt of God's awesome anger. It was during this period that Christ queried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why indeed? Rejected by man; abandoned by

God! Like a widow who loses the love of her life, the solitary Christ pressed on and endured the depression alone.

When people viewed the mangled mass of contorted flesh impaled on the cross, they did not see a man, only a form. Beating their breasts, people fled the scene screaming at the deformity. The ugliness was not the result of a wooden cross, but a propitiated God. For three hours every cell in His torso sizzled with Divine wrath. Wrath reserved for hell, inflamed Him. In the end, *He was marred more than any man* (Isaiah 52:14).

Thus, the greatest theology ever imagined was born at the cross, a theology of love, a theology of an efficacious substitution. He died for me! He died for you! Because He was a man He could die as your substitute; because He was God, He could die enough! Selah!

**With Christ, crucifixion was a death by self-resignation.** Who can comprehend the sufferings of the Savior? At end of His ordeal, He only uttered only two words to describe the totality of His pain, "I thirst" so you and I might have some idea of the trauma He endured. Having completed the work of redemption, He announced, "It is finished."

Crucifixion is a horrible ordeal. The victim can neither will to die nor will to live. He must wait for death. But with Christ it was different. He did not chose death while the pain of crucifixion hammered His body; nor did He choose to die during the agony of imputation. He said, "I lay down my life for the sheep . . . no one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (John 10:17ff). At any time, the Lord could have called a legion of angels to take Him down from the cross. But, He did not summon a single one. He could have remained alive on the cross indefinitely. He was the eternal Logos. But His work was finished, and in order to prove that He is Lord even over death, He surrendered his body to a temporary rule of this feared enemy. He prayed, "Father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit."

Amazed that Christ died so quickly, one of the soldiers in a final act of indignation thrust a sword up into the cardiovascular cavity through the pericardium. John said blood and water poured out. Due to the science of forensic medicine, a post mortem report would have revealed that a thick, sluggish, bloody serum filled His chest cavity and that Christ died of shock and constriction of the heart. (Eastman, 1998)

His death, a fact of history, makes the resurrection, therefore, an historical victory over man's greatest enemy. Out of this came the Gospel. Christ solved man's fundamental problem (death)! Three days later, God raised His body from the dead in triumphant victory! Redemption complete! Hallelujah!!

In conclusion, Christ was marred for your sins. He was marred more than any man that you might be unmarked by sin in the eyes of the Father. Have you thanked Him lately for what He suffered for you?

## **25. THE DAY CHRIST DIED**

Jesus predicted, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). How is it possible for this to be fulfilled if Jesus died on what we call "Good Friday"? There is another possibility and that possibility is that Jesus died on a Wednesday afternoon, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan.

## PILLAR TWO: THE HISTORY OF CHRIST

If we use August 14 A.D. as the date Tiberius Caesar began his reign (Luke 3:1), then Christ was about 30 years old when He was baptized in the fall of 29-30 A.D. (Luke 3:23). Since Christ's ministry lasted 3 ½ years, we know He died in the spring of 33 AD on Wednesday, April 1.

29-30 A.D.      In the fall, Christ was baptized and entered His ministry

33 A.D.          In the spring of 33, Christ died.

*NASA: According to research using astronomical calculations and biblical references, the date of Jesus Christ's death is believed to be Friday, April 3, 33 AD. This date is associated with a lunar eclipse that is referenced in some biblical accounts. NASA's website has also recorded this lunar eclipse and notes it as a possible date for the crucifixion*

One of the difficulties in determining the day of Christ's death is the difficulty of determining if the Biblical writers were using Jewish time, which they probably were, or Roman time. For example, Mark says the Passover was two days away (14:1). This notation happened during the day on Tuesday of Passover Week. In Roman time, this would mean the Passover would be on Thursday. In Jewish time, the Passover would be the next day; i.e. the Jews would count Tuesday as one day, and Wednesday as the second day. Wednesday, therefore, was the day of the Jewish Passover.

A second difficulty in determining the day of Jesus' death is that the Jewish day started at 6:00 PM instead of 12:00 midnight.

A third difficulty in determining the date of Christ's death is that the Jews had two calendars, a lunar calendar and a solar calendar. The Essene Community at Qumran used the solar calendar and the priests used the lunar calendar. The Scripture is clear that Jesus ate the Passover and yet had to be taken down before the Passover (John 18:28). The Pharisees were taking care to not be unclean so that they could eat the Passover. The only logical possibility is that there were two Passovers—an Essene Passover and the Passover of the Jews (John 6:4).

***Using the lunar calendar model, Christ died on Wednesday, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, 33 A.D.*** If the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nissan (the new moon) was on Thursday, March 19, 33 A.D., then the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan would start on Tuesday evening at 6:00 PM and end at 5:59 PM on Wednesday, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan. The daylight hours of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan would have been on Wednesday, April 1, 33 A.D. **The date of Christ's death could have been on Wednesday, April 1, 33 A.D.; i.e. the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, 33 A.D.**

### **PALM SUNDAY**

On the tenth day of the month, Jewish families would select a lamb for the annual family festival. It was to be observed for four days, and if it showed no signs of blemish, it was to be slaughtered for the evening meal on Wednesday afternoon around 3:00 PM. On this day, Jesus appeared in Jerusalem and at the temple. Little did the people realize the Lamb of God presented himself to be inspected and would die for "the sins of the world" on Wednesday afternoon at 3:00 PM.

### **TUESDAY EVENING**

Christ celebrated an Essene Passover on TUESDAY EVENING, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan. The disciples were apparently led by an Essene carrying a jug of water late Tuesday afternoon to a room used by Essenes

while they were in Jerusalem (Mark 14:31). There the Lord celebrated a Passover meal and infused it with new meaning—the **Lord's Supper**. Jesus was arrested and tried Tuesday night by the temple police.

### **WEDNESDAY**

On Wednesday morning at 9:00 a.m., the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, our Lord was crucified. At 12:00 PM, our sins were imputed to Him. Christ died at 3:00 PM on Wednesday, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, April 1, 33 A.D. The Passover lambs were slain about 3:00 PM on Wednesday, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan. Jewish families ate the Passover meal on Wednesday evening, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nissan.

Thus, is revealed the glorious truth, “*For even Christ our **Passover** is sacrificed for us*” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

*This pastor believes in “Good Wednesday” rather than “Good Friday.” We believe that “Good Friday” is a dogmatic tradition to represent the crucifixion rather than the actual day Christ died. We believe Jesus died for our sins on Wednesday of that week. (Keith, 2009)*

Annually, the appointed priest would climb the pinnacle of the temple at the place of blowing (S.W. corner), and blow the ram's horn to signal the acceptance of and the death of the lambs in preparation for the Passover Seder service. Little did they know that the True Lamb was sacrificed for them at that very hour. On this day, a strange darkness occurred over the land. Dionysius the Areopagite is supposed to have mentioned this event in the most decided manner: for being at Heliopolis in Egypt, with his friend Apollophanes, when our Savior suffered, they there saw a wonderful eclipse of the sun, whereupon Dionysius said to his friend, "Either God himself suffers, or sympathizes with the sufferer" (Clarke, 1810-1826).

### **THURSDAY**

From Wednesday, April 1, 33 A.D. evening at 6:00 PM till Thursday at 5:59 PM would be the first day of the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**, a high holy day in Israel, a special Sabbath.

### **FRIDAY**

The daylight hours on Friday would be the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, a regular business day. During the daylight hours on Friday, the Jewish leaders petitioned Pilate to post a guard at the tomb (Matthew 27:64). Also on Friday, the women purchased more spices to complete the burial of Jesus (Mark 16:1). After the big day of shopping, the women prepared meals in advance for the Sabbath, Saturday, the 17<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, April 4<sup>th</sup>.

### **SATURDAY**

According to Luke 23:56, the women rested on the regular weekly Sabbath, the 17<sup>th</sup> of Nissan.

### **SUNDAY**

On our Saturday night, or the Jewish Sunday (after 6:00 PM), 18<sup>th</sup> of Nissan Jesus rose from the dead and the guards fled the tomb (our Saturday night, either April 4<sup>th</sup> if it was before midnight or April 5<sup>th</sup> if it was after midnight).

### **Figure 5: Passover Week Chart**

## PILLAR TWO: THE HISTORY OF CHRIST

| Day          | Jewish Date           | Julian Date        | Time      | Event                     |
|--------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| Sunday       | 12th of Nissan        | March 29           |           | Palm Sunday               |
| Monday       | 13th of Nissan        | March 30           |           | Jesus cleanses temple     |
| Tuesday      |                       | March 31           |           | Day of teaching           |
| Tues 6:00 PM | 14th of Nissan begins |                    |           | Lord's Supper, arrest     |
| Wednesday    | 14th of Nissan        | April 1st, 33 A.D. | 9:00 A.M. | Jesus crucified           |
| Wed 6:00 PM  | 15th of Nissan begins |                    | 3:00 PM   | Jesus died                |
|              |                       |                    | 6:00 PM   | Passover Meal by Jews     |
| Thursday     | 15th of Nissan        | April 2            |           | High Holy Day             |
| Thurs        | 16th of Nissan        |                    |           |                           |
| Friday       | 16th of Nissan        | April 3            |           | Romans post a guard       |
| Fri 6:00 PM  | 17th of Nissan        |                    |           | Women purchase spices     |
| Saturday     | 17th of Nissan        | April 4            |           | Women observe Sabbath     |
| Sat 6:00 PM  | 18th of Nissan.       |                    |           | Jesus rises from the dead |
| Sunday       | 18th of Nissan        | April 5            |           | Women visit the tomb      |

**Figure 6: A Harmony of the Gospels Chart**

| Day          | Matthew | Mark | Luke | John  |
|--------------|---------|------|------|---|
| Friday Night |         |      |      | 12:1 Six days before Passover (Jewish time) |
| Saturday     |         |      |      |   |

PILLAR TWO: THE HISTORY OF CHRIST

|   |  |   |  |  |
|---|--|---|--|--|
|   |  |   |  | Mary Anointed Jesus Feet <sup>15 1</sup>                       |
| Sunday a.m.   | 21:1-17 Triumphal Entry  | Mark 11:1 Goes to temple and turns around.  | 19:28  | 12   |
| Monday a.m.   | Fig Tree<br>Temple discourses<br>21:18-26:5  | 11:12-13:27 Fig Tree cursed<br>Temple cleansed<br>Temple discourses   | 19:47; 20:1 Luke lumps together<br>Discourses  |  |
| Tuesday AM<br><br>-----<br>Tuesday PM<br>6:00 PM -6:00 PM<br>14 <sup>th</sup> of Nissan | Two days Passover<br><br>26:1 Could mean one day Jewish time.<br><br>Long day of teaching<br><br>Passover<br>Arrest<br>Trial | Fig Tree withered<br>11:20<br>14:1 Passover 2 days away. Judas betrayal 14:10<br>14:1 Next day is Passover (Jewish Time) Nissan 14<br>14:12 First day unleaven approached Essene Calendar<br>Last Supper<br>Arrest/trials | 22:1 Passover approaching<br>22:1-6Judas betrays<br>22:7 First day, Last Supper Gethsemane<br>Arrest/trial | 13-17 Last Supper  |
| Wednesday<br><br>This is Passover day<br><br>Wed PM began Nissan 15<br>First Day of     | 9:00 AM Christ crucified<br>3:00 Christ died<br>Passover lambs begin to be slain.<br>Passover meal                           | 15:1 Jews consult with Pilate<br>Christ crucified<br>The preparation day 15:42 Christ buried  | 23:54Death and burial Sabbath follows<br>23:54 A day of preparation  | Passover today<br>Christ crucified<br>19:42 Day of preparation |

<sup>15</sup> Mary's Anointment is given out of sequence in other gospels to explain the motivation of Judas to betray Christ.



|  |  |  |   |  |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| Unleaven Bread the night to eat the Passover | eaten at 6:00                                    |  |   |  |
| Thursday                                     | A High Day                                       | A High Day   | A High Day  | A High Day                                     |
| Friday                                       | 27:62 Scribes consult Romans<br>Tomb made secure | 16:1 Women purchase spices and prepare for Sabbath | 23:56 then they rested. Friday night and into Saturday. |  |
| Saturday                                     | Regular Sabbath                                  | Women rest   | Sabbath Rest  | Sabbath Rest                                   |
| Sunday began at 6:00 on Saturday Night       | Sat night Jesus rises from the dead. Romans flee | 16:1 Women arrive at the tomb Sunday AM            | 24:1 Women arrive on 1 <sup>st</sup> Day of week        | 20:1 Women arrive on the first day of the week |

In conclusion, there is good evidence that Christ was crucified on Wednesday rather than on Friday. This does not mean we need to disparage Good Friday; rather, the tradition of setting aside Friday as a holy day for Christians should be kept and sanctified.

## 26. THE BURIAL OF CHRIST

Christ died about 3:00 PM. on a Wednesday (April 3, 33 A.D.), the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. His body having expired, our Lord's remains escaped *crurifragium* or *skelpkopia* (Grk) a.k.a. *crucifracture* by means of a club or hammer. He did not escape the *coup de grace* by sword or lance (the *perforatio* or *percussio sub alas*) which put an end to life. Out came "water and blood" from the pericardium. This final act of indignation proved that Christ was truly dead.

Jews required a body to be buried before putrescence set in or birds of prey feasted on the carcass. Since people would begin celebrating the Passover at 6:00 PM, Jesus' body had to be taken down from the cross and buried lest the feast be desecrated in Jerusalem.

Joseph of Arimathea, a Sanhedrinist and a secret disciple, and Nicodemus, possibly a secret disciple, "Dared . . ." (Mark: *tolmasas*) to go to Pilate and request the body be taken down from the cross and buried. The proximity of the holy day necessitated haste. Haste is the key word in the burial of Christ's body. The burial volunteers only had a few hours to pick up the body, prepare it, and lay it in a tomb.

The burial party rushed to the market place to purchase aloe, spices, and cheap linen. Aloe was used as a preservative. Spices perfumed the dead body, and torn strips of linen were used to mummify the corpse.

The men had the grisly task of taking down the corpse, wrapping it in a cloth, and carrying it by hand or on a donkey to the tomb site.

The chosen burial site was a new tomb which belonged to Joseph of Arimathea who purchased the small parcel in view of his own death. Every man wanted to be buried on the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem and the temple mount—but land on the Mount of Olives was expensive. I am of the opinion that Joseph, being a rich man desiring to be buried on the Mount of Olives, had previously purchased a plot on the Mount and employed men to build a tomb for him. Since the tomb was available and unoccupied, it made perfect sense to place the body of Jesus in Joseph's tomb.

There is no consensus about the actual tomb site. Neither Gordon's Calvary or the site of the Holy Sepulcher possess the archaeological qualifications necessary for positive identification of Christ's tomb. Trinity Seminary, Albuquerque, New Mexico is in possession of a picture of a tomb on the Mount of Olives that was in existence on the Mount of Olives that perfectly fits the description of the tomb. Located at a Catholic retreat, it was covered over by sisters of a convent who had no idea of the significance of the tomb on their property around 1995. After talking to members of the staff who visited the site and seeing the photography, I was convinced this was the best choice out of present options.

A small opening about three or four feet high led to the main room of the tomb. In front of the man-made cave was a trough used as a track for a rolling stone. The wheel-like stone rolled along the track acted as a door to keep carrion out. If this were the case, then it would take 40 minutes to carry Jesus' body from St. Stephen Gate to or near the top of the Mount of Olives where Joseph's tomb was located.

Furthermore, this location would also explain how easily the women who lived in Bethany, a small village just east of the Mount of Olives, were able to return on Sunday morning to the tomb.

The burial team came from market place, picked up the body of Jesus outside Jerusalem, and climbed the Mount of Olives with the body of Jesus and the burial items. Arriving exhausted, the task force rushed to prepare the body for mummification. They had less than an hour for the morbid task.

The Egyptians perfected mummification by removing internal organs of the deceased and packing the body in salt for about 40 days. Jewish burial customs varied. Usually, the body was tightly wrapped for interment. After a year or two, the bones of the deceased were collected and put into a sarcophagus, a large pottery container. The Jews practiced a form of mummification by wrapping the deceased in strips of linen packed with aloe and spices (John 19:40).

Myrrh and aloe were mixed in a clay pot to form a liquid paste. The body was washed with water and then packaged with the moribund goo and strips of linen cloth. The goal was mummification. Several layers of cloth and paste were needed to complete the task. The linen was cut into four-inch strips about meter in length, dipped in the paste, and wrapped around parts of Jesus' body. Because the Passover curfew was upon them, they were unable to complete the task. However, we know from the resurrection record, they were able to encase Jesus' body in several layers of linen strips, including a headpiece. His face would not be covered.

The tomb was ten feet square, six cubits, or a reed in length. It probably had three stone slabs. The body was placed on one slab and the other two slabs were used as a mourner's bench or for a second body. Each slab would have an indentation where the head was to be placed. After hurriedly encasing the body, the men rolled the 3,000 pound stone (a *Golel*) along the trough and placed a smaller stone (a *Dopheq*)

along one side to keep it from rolling downhill. It would be 6:00 on Wednesday, the beginning of the Jewish Passover feast. The women knew they had to finish the task after the regular Sabbath. They had no knowledge that the tomb would be sealed and guarded by Roman soldiers over the next few days.

Stunned by the crucifixion events, each departed to his/her home for a miserable celebration of the Passover.

Looking down at the temple site from the Mt of Olives the burial team could see the blood stained valley below. On that day, thousands of lambs were slain for the Passover and blood flowed into Kidron east of the temple mount. No one really understood that the True Passover Lamb was slain hours earlier to protect them from the wrath to come, and that His body was safely buried on top of the famous mount.

Having performed the ritual of *Bikkurin*, temple appointees returned on the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan with a sheath of barley (an omer, or 5 pints) to the priests. As the Sun went down, three men went to cut the barley. Questions were asked:

*Has the Sun gone down?*

*On this Sabbath?*

*With this sickle?*

*Shall I reap?*

The sheath was waved before the Lord in the temple as a symbol that the first fruits as well as all the barley harvest belonged to the Lord. A portion was ground, sifted, and baked. The barley flour was mixed with oil and frankincense and waived before the Lord. Little did the nation know that the first **Omer** of the new Pascal Flour to be waved before the Lord was in a tomb waiting to be the **First fruits from the dead**—the **First** of a whole harvest unto God (Edersheim, p. 613ff).

## **27. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST**

The gospel is the good news about the fact of Jesus' historical resurrection.

Personally, I hate the word *religion*, and consider myself an unreligious man.

The word *religion* is used in different ways and has many definitions. Most Christians have little use for the term, and rightly so. The *connotation* of the word is associated with bosom subjectivism and man's effort to reach God by his own effort. The *denotation* of the word *religion* comes from the Latin word *religare* which means "to bind tightly: *re-*, an emphatic term, and *ligare*, "to bind." Hence, religion enslaves men! Yikes! If by "religion," a person means a wretched, subjective system of slavery designed to control men, then I want nothing to do with it!! Islam, Hinduism, and Western religious psycho-therapy are of this sort.

But, there is a generic definition of religion that I can accept and that is true in its purest sense: *Religion is any system of belief about man's fundamental problem of death.* Man is going to die.

**Man's fundamental problem is that *he is going to die*.** Since men will be dead longer than they will live, men have proposed ideas about an *afterlife*. Death is the big unknown. In this sense, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Reincarnation, Christianity, and Atheism have one thing in common. Everyman then, is religious because every human being has a set of faith propositions about man's origin and man's destiny. Even atheists are religious because they possess metaphysical beliefs about what happens after death. All possess beliefs about an *afterlife or no-afterlife*. Secular atheism is very religious because it possesses a very strong set of convictions about what happens after death.

Man's fundamental problem is death! Is there any tangible, forensic proof that there is a second life, continued existence, a heaven or hell, a nirvana, or an afterlife? Is there any proof the soul dies with the body and there is no such thing as continued existence after death?

**What qualifies as "proof?"** When I speak of proof, I am not talking about "analytical proof," or "theoretical proof," or "mathematical proof." I am talking about strict proof. All religions but one offer convincing theories about an *afterlife*. Hindus propose a view that life is cyclical and advance the unprovable proposition of reincarnation. Islam promises a blessed existence for the faithful, even seventy-two virgins for the martyr. Atheism proposes there is no such thing as an *afterlife*! All these views about man's fundamental problem are simply theories, propositions, and proposals. All law is about "proof of claim." 5 U.S.C. I, 5, II, § 556 states a truth, "the proponent of a rule or order has the burden of proof" wherein the proponents of a claim are responsible to provide reliable, probative, and substantial evidence and to exclude irrelevant, immaterial, repetitious evidence when advancing a rule or order.

By proof, I mean *synthetic proof, forensic proof, or legal proof*. That is, when it comes to beliefs about an *afterlife*, I want the kind of proof that I can *see, hear, feel, touch, or taste*. I want proof that will stand up in a court of law against shrewd, aggressive prosecutors. As a juror listening to religious advocates offer evidence about an *afterlife proposition* in the courtroom of life, how am I going to know if there is an afterlife if they do not offer me legal proof? If I cannot see it, hear it, touch it, feel it, or taste it, how am I going to know that it is true?<sup>16</sup>

All religions (including atheism), offer mathematical, analytical propositional theories about what happens after death. None of them can be proved or disproved. For example: Suppose you hear a theory: "God is a force for good and evil and she lives on planet 2009985 in Galaxy 9,784,327." O.K., there is a proposition. How would you prove it or disprove it? It is impossible to do either!

Christianity is completely different than the propositional religions. In the documents, eyewitnesses saw, heard, and touched a living, resurrected Christ. They were not giving us theories about a resurrection. They participated in the event. One hundred percent legally convinced that Jesus rose from the dead to solve man's fundamental problem, the disciples spent their life proclaiming the good news. In fact, most lived under the constant threat of death refusing to renounce their testimony. In death, they did not recant!

These witnesses are no longer on the scene of history. But, they left us their eyewitness testimony and the frail objections of hostile witnesses regarding the resurrection event. Eyewitness testimony is legal,

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<sup>16</sup> The reader would do well to get familiar with the rules of evidence and the different kinds of proof required in court: probable cause (police tickets), preponderance of the evidence (civil cases), beyond reasonable doubt (criminal cases), and clear and convincing evidence like in child custody cases.

forensic proof because eyewitness testimony is based on what people see, hear, feel, touch, or taste. In the case of Christ, over 500 men witnessed a dead man come back to life (1 Corinthians 15:1-12). Here is one account (John 20):

### **JOHN'S RECORD**

***John 20:1 The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher.***

The first day of the week would be Sunday morning. Sunday to a Jew began at 6:00 PM Saturday night instead of 12:00 PM midnight. Because Christ's body was prepared for burial in haste between 3:00 and 6:00 on Passover evening, Mary and other women came to complete the task of mummification. On the day Christ died, his body was taken down from the cross, wrapped in a linen cloth, and carried up the Mount of Olives to a tomb. Inside the tomb, the corpse was washed and then wrapped in several layers of linen strips soaked in an aloe paste mixed with spices. On that Sunday morning, Mary led volunteers to complete the encasement of the cadaver while it was still cool before the heat of the day caused the corpse to putrefy and emit unpleasant odors. It had been three long days, and the daunting task of completing the mummification was before them.

When Mary arrived, she noticed the three thousand pound wheel-like stone sitting in the granite track. It was rolled away from the entrance of the man-made cave. When she last visited the tomb, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus bullied the stone over the four-foot entrance. What she did not know was that Pilate ordered a clay seal to be placed on the tomb to indicate Rome's seizure of the property, and that he ordered soldiers to stand guard at the site lest any try to steal the mummified corpse. Furthermore, she had no idea the guards ran for their lives sometime on Saturday night when the stone was rolled away. This they would learn later.

### **THE EXPERIENCE OF PETER AND JOHN**

***Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him (John 20:2).***

Apparently, Mary looked in, saw the body was missing, and assumed the cadaver had been stolen. Fleeing as fast as her feet could stomp, Mary rushed to report the news to Peter and John.

***Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed (John 20:3-8).***

Immediately, Peter and John raced to the tomb. Being younger, John arrived first. Leery about entering tombs, John just peeked inside. Huffing and puffing, Peter arrived.

When Peter and John entered the tomb, they did not see an empty tomb!! What they saw was the unfinished, collapsed, mummified encasement and the isolated headpiece which had rolled down hill into a corner.

If the body had been stolen or transferred to another location, the grave robbers would have picked up the whole mummy and left the tomb completely empty.

If the body had been resuscitated, and by some miracle Jesus' was able to wiggle out of the mummified encasement, Peter and John would have seen strips of aloe-soaked, blood-stained wrappings strewn all over the cave and around the plot. They saw none of this! What they saw was a completely intact, collapsed, mummified encasement, and the isolated headpiece rolled in a corner.

What happened? On Saturday night, Jesus' body was raised from the dead. His resurrected body passed through the encasement without disturbance causing it to collapse by the forces of gravity. His headpiece also impacted by gravity rolled to the side.

When the angel rolled the stone away from the tomb, the clay seal was broken and the soldiers, as frightened as teenagers in a haunted house, split the scene as fast as their sandals could slap.

In the morning, Mary Magdalene arrived and saw the stone rolled away. The stone was rolled away, not to let Jesus out, but to let people in to see, touch, and feel the perfectly intact, collapsed mummified encasement. They witnessed forensic evidence the body was not stolen and that the Jesus had not merely resuscitated and escaped to an unknown location.

What a fact. Christ first appeared to Mary Magdalene, a woman and not a man, a sinner and not to His Mother Mary.

*None of the disciples saw the resurrection!* Rather, they participated in the historical event.

### **THE EXPERIENCE OF MARY MAGDALENE**

*And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God (John 20:14-17).*

When Mary saw the resurrected Christ, she supposed him to be the gardener. When Jesus said to her, "Mary," Mary immediately recognized Jesus' voice. She heard the "corpse" speak, but it wasn't a corpse. It was the risen Savior! Astounded and delighted, she threw herself at his feet and grasps him as if she was never going to let him go. "Raboni," (master), she exclaimed! Her arms did not pass through the image. She touched and felt a real, live being, the resurrected body of Jesus. Jesus spoke to her again in a gentle, comforting way. He explained to her that He was not going to ascend into heaven to be with his Father on this day. Having seen and heard and touched Christ, Mary hurried to inform the bewildered disciples.

**A woman was first to see the resurrected Christ.** In Jewish law, a woman's testimony could not be used in a court of law. If this story was fraudulently fabricated and perpetrated on the naïve, the defrauder would never, never, never included a woman's testimony in the account, must less solicit a woman as the first eyewitness of the resurrection.

The woman has been identified as Mary Magdalene, the scarlet sinner. What a comfort to all sinners that Christ revealed himself first to a known sinner and not to the Virgin Mary. What hope! What comfort!

### **THE EXPERIENCE OF THE DISCIPLES**

***Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord (John 19-20).***

By this time, Mary had seen, heard, and touched the Lord (20:8-18). Reporting this to the disciples, they were in a quandary about the event. Fearing Mary was hallucinating, but still clinging to hope, and fearing a governmental investigation, the disciples hovered together in secret.

While they were querying the day's events, Jesus appeared to the frightened men. He did not enter through a door. As his body had so easily passed through the mummified encasement, his body easily passed through the material door blocking entrance into the gathering of men. They saw Jesus. They did not see a phantom, a ghost, a spirit, or a hologram. They *saw* a real, tangible, living being. They *heard* him speak saying, "Peace be unto you . . ." "They were glad" was the understatement of ages! These men were thrilled!! But, weeks passed before the reality of Easter Sunday settled into a firm conviction that Jesus solved man's fundamental problem.

### **THE EXPERIENCE OF THE THOMAS**

***The other disciples therefore said unto Thomas, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing (John 20:24-27).***

When Thomas heard the report that the disciples *saw* the Lord, he remained unconvinced. Possibly, he thought they were all delusional.

**Unfortunately**, Thomas has been labeled "*Doubting Thomas*." Thomas was not a man filled with wretched unbelief. Nor, was Thomas a naïve, gullible, simpleton who could be easily swayed by hallucinating men and delusional women. He was a realist—a juror, sort of speak, who demanded empirical proof of resurrection. He had to see, to touch, and to hear the resurrected Christ before he could draw a conclusion that the report of a resurrected Christ was indeed and indisputable fact.

When Christ appeared, Thomas saw, touched, and heard the risen Christ. He did not see a phantom or a spirit, but he saw and touched a real, tangible, squeezable, physical alive body of Christ—a resurrected body.

After Christ appeared to Thomas personally so he could see, hear, and feel the resurrected body of Christ, Thomas declared his verdict, "My Lord and My God!"

If Jesus conquered man's most fundamental problem, then He is God! If he defeated death in time and space, then death is no longer master of man's fate. Jesus is Lord of life. He must be served.

The disciples traveled the Roman world proclaiming what they had seen, touched, and heard. They did not offer men theories about an *afterlife*; they presented forensic evidence that One Man in history conquered death in a visible, tangible way, which we call “the resurrection.” They did not offer men “religion,” or “duty,” or propositions about heaven, but testified, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you” (1 John 1:3). They did not pummel men with religion or chain men to religious duty. **They provided empirical proof that One Man in history solved man’s greatest problem!!** Since this is true, He must be worshipped as Lord and God.

In conclusion, not all religions are the same. All religions but one are suppositions about an *afterlife*. Only Christianity offers strict proof that there is life beyond the grave. Since this is the case, Christianity is the only true religion. All other religions are false, man-made systems that cannot save men.

For those who examine the evidence and commit themselves to Christ as “Lord and God,” the risen Christ promises to give them the gift of eternal life and to solve their fundamental problem:

*And I give unto them **eternal** life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand (John 10:28).*

## **DIRECT EVIDENCE**

Jesus’ body lay in the tomb three days and three nights. The confused disciples were scattered. None of them expected a resurrection. Though Jesus spoke of these things, most thought he was speaking parabolically.

### **Will it stand up in a court of law?**

To prove a case in court, the defendant needs primary, direct evidence. **Direct evidence** is firsthand evidence. There are no living witnesses today. That generation has passed from the stage of history, but their testimonies remain. The NT documents record their witness. We have demonstrated that the NT witness is abundant, recorded scientifically, and passes all the tests of the ancient writing rule. We can, therefore, examine their testimony.

You can have confidence that the resurrection is true based on the evidence surviving the cross-examination of eyewitness testimony.

## **THE TESTIMONY OF EYEWITNESSES**

### **THE EYEWITNESSES**

***2 Peter 1:16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.***

There is a difference between myth and history; fact and fiction. For example, who is Little Red Riding Hood? Where did she live? When did she live? What country is she from? Did anyone in history know her? None of these questions can be answered affirmatively because Little Red Riding Hood is a myth. However, when we come to the person of Christ, we know when he lived, where he lived, what he did, and we know about the people who knew him.



There is a difference between hearsay and eyewitness testimony; between *analytical evidence* and *synthetic evidence*. Analytical evidence is pure proof or mathematical proof. It works in theory. Synthetic evidence is historical, legal proof—the establishment of fact by use of evidence. Our God is not theoretical. He has entered history in time and space in the person of Christ with many *infallible proofs*—*proofs required in the courtroom* (Acts 1:3)<sup>17</sup>.

### **WHO WERE THESE WITNESSES?**

Matthew: Levi, son of Alphaeus, tax collector, one of the twelve disciples, author of the Book of Matthew—an account of the life of Jesus Christ.

Mark: cousin of Barnabas, assistant to Paul, intimate friend of Peter from whom he received much information about Jesus, and author of the Book of Mark

Luke: doctor, historian, traveling companion of Paul, possibly a Gentile convert, friend of the family of the Latin poet Lucanus; author of Luke and Acts: His description is found in Luke 22-24.

John: Son of Zebedee, brother of James, fisherman by trade, one of the twelve, one of the inner three, stayed close to Jesus death on the cross, and records his eyewitness testimony.

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome and Joanna.

Two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Ten disciples including all but Judas and Thomas.

Thomas: One of the twelve, the empiricist who insisted on proof of claim.

More than 500 people witnessed the risen Christ.

Saul of Tarsus, adversary and skeptic, persecutor of the church, author of 13 letters in the NT

### **SURVIVING EVIDENCE**

The testimonial accounts vary in minute detail. But all agree (Matthew 27:50, 59, 28:8).

- Jesus was alive.
- Jesus was dead.
- Jesus was alive after His death.

### **LEGAL NOTES**

Courts are not interested in *possibility*, but *probability*

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<sup>17</sup> Note: the Book of Acts was written by a legal mind recording the presentation of the gospel in the courtroom of the world. The reader should study the book of Acts from a legal perspective and note the many forensic terms used to advance the facts of the resurrection to a practical, skeptical jury in the Roman world.

Suppose you saw a midget fleeing from a room with a knife in his hand. Looking inside the room you see a dead body. Blood is oozing from his chest. There are no windows or doors in the room other than the one you entered. Though it is possible a Martian killed the man, it isn't probable. The detective would not be interested in a Martian theory. He would want to know all about the midget who fled the scene with a knife in his hand.

The courts are interested in proof beyond reasonable doubt. There is no such thing as absolute certainty, only reasonable certainty.

Perjury must be attacked. How do you attack perjury? First, attacking either the character of the witness or the facts of his testimony can expose perjury.

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence? People can make any faith claim they wish, but all must ask, "*What is the evidence?*"

### **EVIDENCE SURVIVING CROSS EXAMINATION**

**Prosecution Strategy One: Attack the testimony.** Because the gospel accounts differ in the detail, and because there are omissions in the records, the testimonies can't be trusted.

Example: Matthew records an earthquake on Easter morning, Mark does not. Mark mentions Salome, Luke does not. Luke mentions the presence of two angels. John does not. John records the investigation of Peter and John. Matthew does not.

**Defense:** Omissions are not contradictions. Agreement on detail demonstrates collusion, while differences in detail substantiate a true eyewitness account. These differences testify to the honest, but different perspective each witness possessed.

**Prosecution Strategy Two:** Destroy the credibility of the witnesses.

**These men were credulous men and easily deceived.**

**Defense:** Not so. These were ordinary men. Just as we have never seen a resurrection, neither had they. The Gospels record their skepticism. Look at Thomas. He would not believe without empirical, proof. He demanded to see, hear, and touch this "so called" living Christ. There is almost no evidence these men were credulous men or fell into the plight of "easy believism" or fideism.

**These men were dishonest and tried to deceive the public.**

**Defense:** You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence. They had no reason not to speak the truth. It would have been easier to lie that the resurrection did not happen than it was to testify that "the impossible" (the resurrection) did happen. Their testimony brought trouble into their lives. They faced persecution, even death. Furthermore, these men were Jews who lived under a strict, high moral code, and they followed Jesus who was a moral teacher. The idea that they were evil, wicked, lying men is contrary to the Biblical record.

**These men colluded together to deceive the public.**

**Defense:** You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence? The differing details in their testimonies indicate that they did not get together and create a story. Their testimonies are filled with historical detail but they are not smooth and polished.

Unity was fragile among the disciples: They were fishermen, tax collectors, zealots, and businessmen. They could not agree in life, much less in death. One has to wonder if they had the capacity to agree on anything. However, they did agree on history's most amazing event because each saw the living Christ.

**There were women witnesses.**

**Defense:** No Jew, seeking to delude the public, would ever include the testimony of women. In Jewish eyes, women could not be trusted as witnesses in a court of law. Even Paul, the rabbi, did not include women in his defense of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-12). These men simply called it as they saw it. Thus, women bore witness to what they saw.

**The apostles manufactured a testimony to establish a new religion and to gain for themselves a place in history.**

**Defense:** These men were not "religious masochists." So hostile was the vanguard of Judaism, these men faced arrest, torture, excommunication, loss of family, and execution for their testimony. Imagine a discussion of the disciples: "Fella's, I know we are going to lose our families, our fortunes, our country, and our lives. We will probably be beat and bruised, tarred and feathered, beheaded and crucified for this lie, but let's go ahead and do it anyway."

The presence of hostile witnesses: If these men had varied from the truth, many would have gladly pointed out the inconsistency in their message. They couldn't afford to risk inadequacies. "We are witnesses of these things," said the apostles (Acts 5:32).

There is a story of Sherlock Homes and the Barking dog. When Watson asked Sherlock how he solved the crime, Homes remarked, "It was the silence of barking dog that told me who the murderer was." Homes reasoned that the dog always barked when strangers came near the house. On the night of the murder, the dog did not bark. The silence of the dog alerted Homes that the murderer must have been a family member with whom the dog was well acquainted. The silence of the Pharisees about the resurrection is amazing. Why didn't these hostile witnesses bring forth evidence of a stolen corpse? Why didn't they produce a body? Why didn't they bring forth witnesses regarding a thief?

Look at present day media and the "Shark attack" that occur when a politician slips up. They become shark bait.

If the disciples respected Christ so much and stole the body, you would think they would have buried the body and set up a memorial for him so his followers could make visits to the site. But, they could not do this because there was no body to bury.

### **EVIDENCE SURVIVING PROSECUTION**

- Jesus was alive
- Jesus died and was buried.
- Jesus was alive after the resurrection

## **COUNTERCLAIMS**

Testimony of Hostile Witnesses of the 21st Millennium: Many existed, and Luke and others had opportunity to interview them. Who could prove Jesus was dead? Where was the body located?

### **COUNTERCLAIM NO. 1:**

**Jesus swooned, or the disciples thought they saw a resurrected Christ.**

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

“Damp tomb” is not a cure for crucifixion. How would a severely wounded man move a 3000 pound rock, tippy-toe past the soldiers, and escape to a secret location during Passover with a swarm of Pilgrims camping all around Jerusalem and on the Mount of Olives? This claim is more incredible than the resurrection.

### **COUNTERCLAIM NO. 2:**

**The disciples stole the body.**

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

Their lives were in danger. Why would they steal a body? A Roman guard would have to be overcome by force. The records reveal the apostles weren’t expecting a resurrection. What could possibly be their motivation? What did they do with the body? How did they keep the secret under threat of life? How did they deceive the public? It takes greater faith to believe this than it does the resurrection.

### **COUNTERCLAIM NO. 3:**

**ROMANS OR JEWS STOLE THE BODY.**

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

What would be the motivation? A stolen body was the last thing the Jews, Romans, or the disciples wanted. Rome wanted peace at all cost. Jews wanted to silence the name of Jesus at all cost, and a dead, lying prophet was of no advantage to the defeated, disappointed, devastated disciples—and they did not want to experience the same fate as their former Leader—death by crucifixion.

### **COUNTERCLAIM NO. 3:**

**The disciples experienced mass hallucination about a resurrection.**

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

Anything is possible, but is it probable? Evidence points to a literal, physical, resurrection. They touched, handled, and saw a risen Christ.

What caused the hallucination? Could it last over a 40-day period? What is the probability of all the disciples and 500 others hallucinating? It is easier to believe the resurrection than the wild claim of mass hallucination.

**COUNTERCLAIM NO. 4:**

**They were all crazy.**

You can say anything you want, but what is your evidence?

These men didn't act or speak like crazy men. They appear to be normal, capable men.

Could crazy men follow the greatest moral teacher ever to walk this planet, mobilize an army of Christians to saturate Greek, Roman, and Jewish cultures, and to totally dominate an entire planet by 350 AD?

Crazy men don't unite: I once heard a story about a preacher who visited an insane asylum where he observed about 200 patients walking about in a large courtyard. He asked the one attendant on duty, "Aren't you worried about an uprising and a takeover?" The attendant replied, "No! Crazy people don't unite."

**COUNTERCLAIM NO. 5:**

**The disciples visited the wrong tomb.**

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

Why didn't the hostile witnesses take them to the right tomb? What about the Roman guards? Couldn't they find the right tomb? There are not many tombs on the Mount of Olives. The women knew exactly what tomb Jesus was buried in . . . and they visited the tomb in the morning during daylight hours. Why would they be confused? The crucifixion event left an indelible impression on the senses.

**COUNTERCLAIM NO. 6:**

**It's kind of fishy that only Christians saw the resurrection, and only Christians wrote the nt. this resurrection story has bias written all over it.**

You can claim anything you want, but what is the evidence?

Do we accuse witnesses in a court of law of bias because they testify to their experience or write down what they saw? Do we accuse witnesses of bias because they were there and saw an event?

Could any man witness a resurrection and remain an unbeliever? Reason tells us that witnesses to a trauma of this nature would indeed be compelled to speak about their experience, write it down, or publish their findings. All books are written because of the experience and motivation of authors—and, we don't accuse them of bias for authoring a book.

**COUNTERCLAIM NO. 7:**

**Jesus only appeared in private and not in public.**

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

How would you explain the resurrection? You would have to use the same criteria for evidence we are using now. This objection presupposes we are free to dictate what kind of post-resurrection appearances

are acceptable. If it happened that way it was reported, why should we expect it to be any different? If the living Christ did appear in public, the evidence needed to prove a resurrection would still be the same as it would in a court of law, and we would still have to examine the original, written documents.

Maybe he did appear in public. It is hard to remain an unbeliever once you have seen a resurrection. The fact of 500 witnesses is a very public event. All were converted. All were convinced! How many more witnesses do you need in a court of law to prove a fact? Because so many saw the resurrection, a public refutation was impossible even in Jerusalem.

### **COUNTERCLAIM NO. 8:**

#### **The church created the resurrection and it became a myth.**

You can claim anything you want, but what is the evidence?

Accurate presentation of facts, historical detail, geographical accuracy, and cultural specificity indicate men who lived at the time of Christ wrote these records. How could a churchman living after the destruction of 70 A.D. know anything about Jerusalem, Bethany, the temple mount, Passover traditions, etc.?

Myths take time for legends to develop. There are too many details and addresses and personal names in the resurrection account to merit a myth. There is no “once upon a time . . .”

Myths did develop, but not until the second century. These myths were refuted by the gospel accounts to bring imaginations in line with historical facts. These myths were refuted by stewards of the gospel.

**Silence of the Hostile witnesses:** Finally, what evidence was brought forth in the first century by hostile witnesses to remonstrate against the resurrection? There is absolutely nothing! There is no evidence, no documents, no books, no letters, no pottery shards. Why didn’t highly motivated men who had power to protect write or publish Counterclaims? They simply could not refute the clear facts . . . and they had no facts in support of a counterclaim.

If a man wants to disprove the resurrection, he must answer the following:

- The empty tomb: How do you account for it?
- The transformation in the disciples’ character. How do you account for it?
- The rapid spread of Christianity while hostile witnesses could marshal evidence and counterclaims. How do you account for it?
- The silence of Hostile witnesses. How do you account for it?
- The use of women in testimony. How do you account for it?
- Why the burial place of Jesus never became a sacred place. How do you account for it?
- Why the disciples died violent deaths for a lie. How do you account for it?

**Conclusion of the Defense:** A number of reliable men and women witnessed a medical death and burial. Three days later these same witnesses saw, touched, and heard the living Christ. Consequently, they

rightly concluded that Jesus of Nazareth literally, physically, materially rose from the dead, thus solving man's fundamental problem. If Jesus rose from the dead, he is Lord. Whatever he says is absolute truth. If you will believe that He literally, tangibly, materially, physically rose from the dead, and you will confess Him as Lord and Master of your life, you can have everlasting life (Romans 10:9,10). Trust Him today, and he will be your Savior for eternity.

*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).*

## **LEGAL TESTIMONY TO THE RESURRECTION**

**Simon Greenleaf** (1783-1853) was one of the founders of Harvard Law School. He authored the authoritative three-volume text, *A Treatise on the Law of Evidence* (1842), which is still considered "the greatest single authority on evidence in the entire literature of legal procedure." Greenleaf literally wrote the rules of evidence for the U.S. legal system. He was certainly a man who knew how to weigh the facts. He was an atheist until he accepted a challenge by his students to investigate the case for Christ's resurrection according to Greenleaf's own expertise on the rules of evidence. After personally collecting and examining the evidence based on rules of evidence that he helped establish, Greenleaf became a Christian and wrote the classic, *Testimony of the Evangelists*.

Let (the Gospel's) testimony be sifted, as it were given in a court of justice on the side of the adverse party, the witness being subjected to a rigorous cross-examination. The result, it is confidently believed, will be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability, and truth (Greenleaf, 1995).

**Sir Lionel Luckhoo** (1914-1997), a modern day Sherlock Homes, is considered one of the greatest lawyers in British history. He's recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records as the "World's Most Successful Advocate" fifteen times because of his amazing record of 245 consecutive murder acquittals. Luckhoo received the CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) in 1962. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II – twice; once in 1966 and again in 1969. He was the world's greatest expert on the rules of evidence (The Guinness Book of World Records, 1990 edition). Luckhoo declared:

*I humbly add I have spent more than 42 years as a defense trial lawyer appearing in many parts of the world and am still in active practice. I have been fortunate to secure a number of successes in jury trials and **I say unequivocally the evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for** doubt (Sir Lionel Luckhoo, *The Question Answered: Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* Luckhoo Booklets, back page. [http://www.hawaiiichristiansonline.com/sir\\_lionel.html](http://www.hawaiiichristiansonline.com/sir_lionel.html)).*

**Lee Strobel** was a Yale-educated, award-winning journalist at the Chicago Tribune. As an atheist, he decided to compile a legal case against Jesus Christ and prove him to be a fraud by the weight of the evidence. As Legal Editor of the Tribune, Strobel's area of expertise was courtroom analysis. To make his case against Christ, Strobel cross-examined a number of Christian authorities, recognized experts in their own fields of study (including PhD's from such prestigious academic centers as Cambridge, Princeton, and Brandeis). He conducted his examination with no religious bias, other than his predisposition to atheism.

Remarkably, after compiling and critically examining the evidence for himself, Strobel became a Christian. Stunned by his findings, he organized the evidence into a book entitled, *The Case for Christ*, which won the Gold Medallion Book Award for excellence. Strobel asks one thing of each reader - remain unbiased in your examination of the evidence. In the end, judge the evidence for yourself, acting as the lone juror in the case for Christ . . .

As a "lone juror," I sat quiet in my chair... As jurors often do in the jury room, I asked to return once again to a provoking piece of evidence... (Strobel, 1988)

It is good news that Christ's resurrection is true and certain. Consequently, we have assurance that His claims are true and that His promises will be fulfilled as we face man's most fundamental problem.

## 28. THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

The blessed ascension of the Savior took place during the day on the east side of the Mount of Olives near Bethany forty days after his resurrection, sometime in May, 33 A.D. Having appeared to his disciples and having been seen by over 500 men, Jesus instructed his disciples to go throughout the world and bear witness to what they had seen and heard (Acts 1:8).

Shortly after the Lord's final instructions, Jesus was physically, materially, visibly transported into heaven in full view of the disciples. Astonished, two angels appeared and announced to them the return of Christ to His heavenly home (Acts 1:10-11; 1 Timothy 3:16)). Having witnessed Christ's ascension, the disciples returned to the city of Jerusalem and to the upper room where they last broke bread with Christ. The ascension, therefore, explains what happened to our Lord's corporal body. It is good news our Lord as our Representative has ascended into heaven to be in the presence of the Father on our behalf and for His own joy.

### The Present Risen Life of Christ

*The present risen life of Christ (PRL, PEL)* is an historical assumption. Peter declared that the Lord is "exalted to the right hand of God" (Acts 2:33). Before his martyrdom, Stephen looked up and said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 2:56). In John's vision (Revelation), he saw Christ in his *present exalted life (PEL)* conducting his present high priestly ministry (Revelation 1) walking in the midst the candlesticks. Jesus **PEL** is not something most of us can see except with the eyes of faith. It is a truth, and it should be accepted, but often difficult to grasp. For this reason Paul prayed that the eyes of believers might be "*enlightened*" to see and understand Christ in His highly exalted state as having all "*rule, and authority, power and dominion*" under is feet (Ephesians 1:18-23). It is good news that Christ is in heaven in a position of authority acting on behalf of his people as they seek to represent Him on Earth.

## 29. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST



The term “*second coming*” of Christ is a coined phrase popular with Christians today. It is not a biblical term, but it is a biblical concept. It is **not** an historical event or fact, and technically **not** part of the historical gospel proclamation. But, it is a hope presented in the gospel and therefore discussed here.

### **KEY WORDS OF THE SECOND COMING**

The words “return” and “second coming” are not biblical words. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the language of the second coming. The NT speaks of His coming (parousia), His revelation (apokalypsis) and His manifestation (epiphaneia) (Ladd, 1956).<sup>18</sup>

#### **The Parousia**

It can mean “coming,” “arrival,” or “presence.”

*1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 . . . and remain unto the parousia of the Lord . . .*

The word *parousia* means *coming* or *arrival*, and it refers to the Lord’s Second Advent. There is nothing secret about this coming. When he comes with a shout, it will be loud enough to wake the dead.

*1 Thessalonians 3:13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the parousia of the Lord Jesus with all his saints.*

The word *parousia* is used in 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

*2 Thessalonians 2:8 . . . Lord Jesus will destroy with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation (epiphany) of his **parousia**.*

Here the term *parousia* refers to *arrival*. The term *epiphany* refers to the *out shining or brightness* of his coming. Before us is a fireworks display that makes the Boston 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration look like a dimly lit candle.

*Matthew 24:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what (shall be) the sign of thy parousia, and of the end of the world?*

Here the word *parousia* means *coming*. But, there is an interpretive issue with this text. Does this *parousia* refer to the Second Advent or to the Lord’s coming in judgment upon Jerusalem in 70 A.D.?<sup>19</sup>

*1 Corinthians 16:17 I am glad of the parousia of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.*

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<sup>18</sup> Since the second coming is not an historical event, it is shrouded with mystery. Issues about the parousia abound such as millennial issues, rapture issues, tribulation issues, and advent issues.

<sup>19</sup> One of the great issues regarding the second coming of Christ is the interpretation of Matthew 24. Portions of it (24:29-35) appears to refer to the second coming of Christ, but contextually, the entire passage could apply to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Section 24:29-30 appears to be apocalyptic language designed to show our Lord’s presence in judgment upon Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

The word *parousia* refers “to arrival” in this passage. Paul was glad for the arrival of Stephanas and company.

*2 Corinthians 7:6 Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the parousia of Titus;*

The term *parousia* means “arrival” not just *presence* in these verses.

*James 5:7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the parousia of the Lord.*

Here *his* coming is not presence, but the arrival that is in view. He could be referring to the Jesus’ arrival at the end of this age or Jesus coming to adjudicate the complaint offered up in prayer before the Supreme Court of Heaven by the laborers.

### **The Apokalypsis**

*Apokalypsis* means revelation:<sup>20</sup>

*1 Corinthians 1:7 So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the apokalypsis of our Lord Jesus Christ:*

The hope of the believer is the revelation of Jesus Christ. The Christian’s great hope is not the alleged Jewish millennium or the *rapture*, but the *apokalypsis* of our Lord. Rest from persecution and fiery trials will happen at the *apokalypsi*. Paul and Peter point to the *apokalypsis* as the believer’s ultimate hope.

*2 Thessalonians 1:7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed (apokalypsis) from heaven with his mighty angels.*

*1 Peter 1:7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the apokalypsis of Jesus Christ:*

*1 Peter 1:13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the apokalypsis of Jesus Christ;*

*1 Peter 4:13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be apokalypsis, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*

The *apokalypsis* is a Second Advent concept.

*2 Thessalonians 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the epiphaneia (brightness) of his coming*

*Revelation 1:1 The apokalypsis of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified (it) by his angel unto his servant John:*

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<sup>20</sup> If the rapture occurs first, and then the *apokalypsis* happens at the end of the tribulation, then the revelation of Christ is not the “blessed hope.” If the Pretribulation views are correct, then the revelation is not for salvation, but for the judgment of the wicked. Salvation at the rapture has already occurred for the church.

But the term “*coming*” has a present connotation; that is, Christ is not only coming to consummate the age, He also comes in time to judge men and to save his people from the anti-god forces (2:5; 2:16; 2:25; 3:3; 3:9-11; 3:20). A great hope to the seven churches was our Lord’s knowledge and concern for them, but also His promise to come soon to aid them in their struggle against their adversaries. For this reason we pray. We believe that Christ hears our prayers and answers them in the course of our life time. If all hope is bound up in the second coming of Christ, we are the most miserable people indeed. Epiphaneia in Revelation 1:1, however, means “manifestation,” and it obviously applies to the *apokalypsis* at the end of the tribulation.

*1 Timothy 6:14 That thou keep (this) commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the epiphaneia of our Lord Jesus Christ*

### **Epiphineia**

Use of “until the *epiphaneia* . . .” refers to the Second Advent. Obedience is expected until His manifestation at the end of this age.

*2 Timothy 1:10 But is now made manifest by the **epiphaneia** of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

*2 Timothy 4:1 I charge (thee) therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his **epiphaneia** and his kingdom.*

*2 Timothy 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his epiphaneia.*

*Titus 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious epiphaneia of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ;*

His *epiphaneia* is the hope of the living believer. Rewards happen at his second coming. Presently, His kingdom is real and true and active, but hidden from the view men. At his *epiphaneia* His kingdom will be made manifest to all men, great and small.

**No** distinction should be made between *parousia*, the *apokalypse*, and the *epiphany*. They are a single event.

The second coming of Christ as announced to the disciples by the angels on the day of ascension has not yet occurred in history. It is not an historical event, yet! But, it is a hope—a hope deeply associated with the historical birth, death, and resurrection of the Savior. The kingdom is now and not-yet, but awaits its consummation at the end of this age.

### **MATTERS REGARDING THE SECOND COMING**

**First**, there is an issue regarding the *rapture* and the *second coming*. Dispensationalists advance a pretribulation view of the rapture, that is, they place the rapture (1 Thessalonians 5:17) at least seven years before the second coming. Isolating the rapture from the *parousia* of Christ and making it distinct from the *parousia* lacks exegetical integrity. I reject the bifurcation of the rapture from the Second Coming for the following reasons: (a) contextually, the rapture is so associated with the *parousia* that it cannot be separated from our Lord’s coming; i.e. separating the two cannot be supported from exegesis of 1 Thessalonians four; (b) the word “rapture” is a verb or an action of the second coming. The term

“rapture” is not a noun whereas the term *parousia* is a noun. To build an entire doctrine on a verb is **not** a sound theological practice; and (c) the origin of the pretribulation view is not based on exegesis, but a dynamic distinction between Israel and the church, a theological perspective unique to dispensationalism<sup>21</sup>.

**Second**, there is a theological battle regarding the coming of Christ and **the interpretation of the Olivet Discourse**.

How do you interpret it? Much of the discourse appears to reflect on the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Futurists interpret the entire passage as unfulfilled. The birth pains are still to come. Preterists interpret the entire passage as having been fulfilled in 70 A.D. The birth pains were the traumatic events of the Roman invasion. Historicists take “a both” position and see the destruction of Jerusalem as a type of the tribulation to come. If the passage is entirely about the second coming, then the interpreter has totally ignored the context of judgment (Matthew 23) and the Lord’s prediction of the destruction of the temple (Matthew 24:1-3). If the passage is to be interpreted preteristically, what does this position do to the doctrine of the *parousia* from this passage? Are there many comings of Christ? If the passage is about the second coming and the destruction of 70 A.D., where does one separate the two (in verse 29 or verse 36)? The word “*immediately*” (Εὐϋγε,ωι) appears to connect 24:1-28 with section 24:29 and following.

There is no easy solution to the problem. For sure, we may not have enough information about this passage to make an absolute determination. Personally, I favor the preterist interpretation on this passage for the following reasons:

The context of Matthew 24 is about the judgment on the nation and its leaders (23:33-38);

The phrase “*this generation*” (23:36) is referring to **Jesus’ generation**, not some future generation following the imitation-state of Israel in 1948 by Ashkenazi Zionists.

The questions asked by the disciples were in context to the Lord’s announcement about the destruction of the temple (24:2). Matthew twenty-four addresses Jewish concerns, not Gentile interests. The disciple’s questions are ambiguous. Apparently, in their minds, the disciples connected the destruction of the temple with the end of the age. We must not credit the disciples with having an accurate, precise eschatological view—views that have been elaborately produced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This destruction of the temple, the end of the age, and His coming was as much a mystery to them as it is to us;

The Lord appears to correct the disciples’ view that the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the age would happen at the same time (24:26-28); i.e. the word “*immediately*” can**not** be disconnected from what follows; that is, it is an exegetical fallacy to permit the term to include 2000+ years of history. If section 24:1-28 is about the destruction of Jerusalem, then section 24:29ff must be interpreted in light of Jerusalem’s destruction; phrases like the “*sun will be darkened*” is **not** literal language, but *apocalyptic language* in the tradition of Isaiah 13:10; i.e. on the day Jerusalem fell, the Sun did not shine on Jerusalem. Hope crashed for the Jewish people.

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<sup>21</sup> Dispensationalism believes history is divided into seven distinct eras and builds a wall between the Old & New Testaments.

The “*sign of the Son of man*” is not the same thing as the Second Advent. The “*sign*” of His coming could be interpreted as His presence in judgment upon the nation in 70 A.D. when the Roman armies crashed into the temple mount to destroy the temple proper.

The reference to the “*nations*” mourning is probably not a reference to nations of the earth but to the scattered “*tribes*” of Israel (ai` fulai). Why would Gentiles weep over Jerusalem’s destruction? None cared!

The gathering of the “*elect*” in 24:31 does not appear to refer to the rapture but to God’s evangelistic program during the Christian age. If it does refer to the rapture, then the rapture happens after the tribulation, not before.

The “*generation*” mentioned in 24:34 must be connected to the generation mentioned in 23:36 meaning Jesus’ generation, not some future generation;

And finally, futurists have abused this passage by preaching about “*birth pains*” every time a negative global-event happens in history. Futurists tend to make predictions based on an “*unfulfillment*” view of Matthew 24. Since Jerusalem was severely destroyed by Titus as described by Christ in Matthew 24, it is inappropriate to me to turn this into “*double prophecy*” about a restored, geo-political Israel, a fourth temple, and another destruction of Jerusalem. The alleged principle of “double prophecy” is alippery as Penzoi.

**Third**, if one interprets Matthew 24 preteristically, there is not “*one coming*” but “*many comings*” of Christ (Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 7:56; Acts 9:4). Not everyone is comfortable with this idea, including me. But, if this be the case, the Second Advent must be distinguished from our Lord’s multiple comings to aid his people during the Christian-age.

Christ promised to be present with his disciples unto the end of the age (*aeon*) (Matthew 28:19, 20). This presence or coming to the aid of God’s people is not the Second Advent or the Blessed Hope (Titus 2:13). Christ is ruling at the right hand of the Father as Lord and Christ. He comes to assist His people in response to their prayers.

But, there is a coming *parousia*. Just as Jesus left this earth in a visible, tangible, physical way, Christians possess the assurance that Christ will return to earth in a visible, tangible, physical way sometime in the future (Acts 1:9-10). This is the Second Advent and *the Blessed Hope*.

Though there are many unresolved issues regarding the second coming, it is good news that Christ is coming again (Acts 1:9-10; Titus 2:13; Matthew 16:27-28; 25:31-46; Mark 14:62; Luke 12:35-43; John 14:1; 21:22; Acts 1:11; 3:19-21; 17:31; Romans 8:19; 1 Corinthians 1:7; 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:17ff; 5:1-9; 2 Thessalonians 1-2; Philippians 4:5; Hebrews 9:28; James 5:8; 1 Peter 1:5-10; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 1:7; 3:11; 22:20).

**Fourth**, there is the interpretive issue related to the *Book of Revelation*: Preterists interpret the book in light of the destruction of 70 A.D. Historicists apply it to the events of the reformation; and, futurists using a literal hermeneutic see Revelation 4-22 as completely unfulfilled and future to our time. Personally, I favor a combination of the *apocalyptic method of interpretation* of the book with a *preteristic bent* for the following reasons:

- The book is highly symbolic. To use a “literal” approach in the midst of apocalyptic literature is completely inappropriate; It has a literal real meaning, but its messages comes in the form of giant metaphors much like modern political cartoons.
- The interpreter must ask the question, “What did this book mean to the original readers?” To say that chapters 4-20 did not apply to the seven churches is to make a mockery of the Revelation. In other words, what possible encouragement could those suffering in Asia Minor receive in their time of trial knowing that 80% of God’s letter did not apply to them but to some future generation?
- The phrase “*must soon come to pass*” (1:1), if we take words literally, must have direct application to the first century saints in Asia Minor. To insert 2000+ years here is a flawed hermeneutic.

But, applying all Revelation 6-19 to the first century does not appear appropriate either. The book has as much or more to do with the revelation of the present exalted life of Christ (PEL) acting on behalf of his church as it does to His *parousia*; that is, the book appears to be informing us of the energies that will be active in history until the end of the age . . . but not exclusively end times. Revelations informs us of the powers active in now-time.

The visions of John are holy cartoons in **signified form** that demonstrate to the readers the forces behind history that effect their lives. Before us is a Christ who is in control of history. The evils we face are controlled by the living, exalted Christ and will be defeated. This view gives us liberty to interpret the book symbolically and to make application to past, present, and future without dogmatic specificity, either historically or prophetically.

**Fifth**, there is the issue regarding the interpretation of the millennium itself.

*Postmillennialists* assert the view that the church must evangelize the world and bring in the kingdom. The millennium has not arrived in history, and the second coming of Christ is always 1000 years away. While postmillennialists advance political responsibility, their eschatology appears super optimistic.

*Premillennialists* understand that when Christ returns, he will set up his kingdom that will last for 1000 years. At the end of this period, there will be a great battle, which will wrap up history and usher in the eternal kingdom.

*Amillennialists* believe that when Christ returns, He will set up his eternal kingdom and usher in the new heaven and new earth. Since Revelation 20 is the only passage that discusses the millennium, one must take his millennial view from this passage. I favor the amillennial interpretation of this passage for the following reasons:

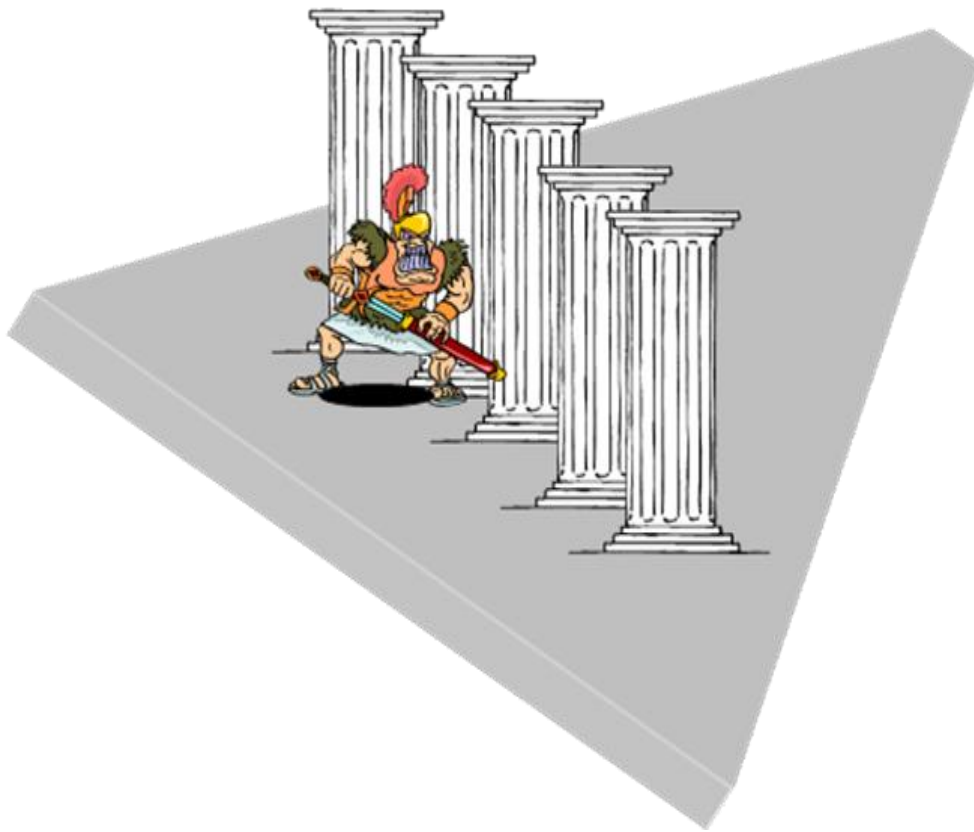
- Revelation is a book of symbols. To interpret the book with vulgar literalism does a disservice to John’s symbolic revelation.
- The “abyss,” the “dragon,” and the “great chain,” are not literal, but symbolic. It appears appropriate to view the 1000 years as a symbolic period—a period in which Satan is prevented from completely deceiving the world about the gospel. Satan’s binding (aorist) in Revelation 20 is a pictorial picture of Satan’s legal binding at the cross (John 12:31).
- The 1000 years is a symbolic number. When the Bible uses numbers literally, they are never perfectly even (See Numbers 1-3). The great issue to the readers of John’s day was, “What about the martyrs?”

What happened to them?” John answers that question in 20:4. The martyrs are safe and “they live” (e;zh-san) safely with a reigning Christ during this period;

- The first resurrection appears to refer to the transmigration of the soul to be with Christ after death rather than to a future, physical resurrection (John 5:25-32). John wants his readers to know that the martyrs are present with Christ and that all who die and go to be with him are in a blessed state. The “millennium” appears to be this Christian age, the age between his first advent and the second advent of our Lord. The next great event in prophetic history is the parousia of Christ and the battle of Gog and Magog, the destruction of the wicked and the salvation of the saints.

In conclusion: The gospel is not a set of propositions about the way life ought to be. The gospel is about the history of Christ. It is good news that Christ was born, died, and rose again. *History is His Story*. It is good news that His story is true and certain. For this reason, Christianity proclaims the gospel of an historical Christ that defeated death and lives today. Since His history is true and certain, then theology is about the meaning of that history. The second coming is not an historical event, but it is a hope resulting from the historical facts of our Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection.

## **PILLAR THREE: THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S HISTORY**





## 30. GREAT IS THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

*1 Timothy 3: 15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*

Paul identifies six parts of the the "mystery of godliness" held up by the Pillar of Truth.

Therefore, this brief seeks to answer the question, "What is the mystery of godliness?"

### ***Without Controversy***

The word "controversy" comes from the Greek word *homologoumenos* which means to perceive, understand, grasp, observe, and see.

We get the word *homoletics* (studies on how to preach) from this term. It works as an adverb modifying the being-verb "is" meaning undeniably, certainly.

The word "without controversy" acts like our English legal terms "notwithstanding," "undeniable," "indisputable," "irrefutable," "unassailable" and "undisputable."

That is to say, any argument contrary to what he is about to state admits no dispute and has no standing. Metaphorically speaking Paul is saying, "You can take what I am about to say to the bank. It is as true as true can get."

### ***Great is the mystery***

The Greek word "mystery" (*musterion*) does not refer to something difficult or impossible to understand.

Rather, it informs us of something hidden or obscured truth in the Old Testament that has manifested itself to mankind, namely, the arrival of the Christ in history.

### ***Great (Mega)***

While we use the term "great" frequently, very few things are really great! But, GREAT is the mystery of godliness.

The Greek word for "great" is *mega*. A superlative adjective, it identifies the wonder and superior quality of a thing. We use this Greek word as a prefix to many English terms: megabyte, megawatt, megastar, megabuck, megavolt, megalomania, megaflop, and many more.

Keep this word in mind as the apostle reveals six facts about the indivisible **MEGA mysteries of godliness** – *of the holy Christ becoming a man* that form the pillar of truth (3:25).

### ***Godliness***

The term "godliness" refers in a general sense to the heart of the gospel, the eye of God, true religion, piety, and sanctification.

While the term "godly" usually refers to acts of piety or to being God-like in habits and character. But, *this is not the stress of the word "godliness" in this text. In this passage "godliness" (eusebeia) is a noun and not an adjective; a fact, and not a fiction; a reality and not a theory; the absolute gospel and not a nice story; the fact of the Son of God becoming a man and not a fable ; a truth and not a myth;*

Having listed the character qualities that should mark pastors and deacons, the apostle is not referring to the Christian's duty to be godly in verse 16. Rather, he shows us the *Source of Godliness* by using the genitive case. Paul points to a person in history -- Someone Who actually existed -- Someone Who is our Banner for righteous living. Any other Model is idolatry.

Paul takes us on a journey to the core of Divine concerns, the invasion of the kingdom of God into history through the Son, "the real McCoy," the prototype of godliness, the source and display of God-like attributes, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Savior is not like Theos, He is Theos. He does not resemble God, He is very God of God!!

*John 1:1, 14 "In the beginning was the Word (logos), and the Word was with God (Theos), and the Word (logos) was God (Theos) . . . and the Word (logos) was made flesh and dwelt (skenoō = tabernacled) among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten (monogenēs = one of a kind) of the Father, full of grace and truth."*

*John 10:30 "I and my Father are one ."*

[Note: The word "one" in this text is a nominative, neuter, adjectival pronoun. The text does not refer to our Lord being one in personality with the Father, but having the same substance as Father, being very God of God as a spiritual being -- the neuter referring to substance and not personality. No other being in the universe can make this claim, but with Christ, the claim came with proof of claim.]

Thus, the core of "godliness" in this text is not about our duty to perfect holiness, but about the marvelous history of Christ: His incarnation, life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and session at the right hand of the Father -- the second pillar of the gospel -- that God was among us in the Person of His Son. Great is the mystery of Theos becoming *anthropos* -- something more significant in history than alleged encounters of a third kind.

I looked up on the internet the ten greatest events in history, and the incarnation of the Son was not listed among them. This *mystery of Godliness* is only understood by true Christians with the Godly mind with faith in the Word of God.

### **SIX HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT THE MEGA MYSTERY OF GODLINESS**

The six verbs in this section are all aorist passives ending with the same sound (theta, eta -- the "uh" sound). They form a rhythmic cadence like a military hymn.

You can almost hear the apostle pounding a railroad spike at the beginning of each stroke while he sings the wonders of this mega mystery: *ephanerotha* (bam), *edikiotha* (bam), *ophtha* (bam), *echaruchtha* (bam), *episteutha* (bam), and *anelamphtha* (bam).

When it comes to godliness, the best among us are like the solar panels on a Mars Rover covered with dust, but Jesus? The Son does not shine as example of Godliness. He IS the essence of Godliness. He

does not mirror the sunlight of holiness, the nucleus of holiness that lights the cosmos burns eternally within the Core of the Savior. He IS to mankind what the Sun is to God's creation.

Theos was in Christ and Christ was Theos in His birth, baptism, temptation, ministry, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and present exalted reign at the right hand of God.

(1) The first fact regarding this mega mystery is the incarnation of Christ -- the day that God became a man.

"God was manifest in the flesh" (KJV) or the alternative, "Who was manifest in the flesh" or "He was manifest in the flesh" (ESV and others).

Because the first rule of interpretation is to "*secure the text*," we must diverge here to wrestle with a textual problem. The KJV translated the text as "*God was manifest in the flesh*" while the NASB and ESV and others translate the text as "*Who*" or "*He was manifest in the flesh*."

Without bogging the reader down in the detail of textual criticism, the reader should know that the original Greek was written in Uncial letters (uppercase without space between words). Over time, ancient manuscripts wore out and developed smears and smudges. This is the case here. Moreover, translators often abbreviated words like  $\Theta\varsigma$  for  $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$  *Theos*, "*God*"

Earlier manuscripts use the term "*He who was manifest*" and not "*God was manifest*." However, we must consider the theology surrounding the textual variance. John is very clear the "*Word* (logos) was with God (*Theos*) and was God (*Theos*) . . . and that the "*logos became flesh*" (John 1:1, 14). Because Jesus is Theos, I tend to sustain the legitimacy of the KJV translation, "*Theos was manifest in the flesh* . . ." But, in comparing ancient texts, the proper translation appears to be, "He was manifest in the flesh" (Robertson, Metzger, Aland and Aland).

Getting past the textual variance, let's move on to the truth of this passage.

The GREAT mystery is that God / Elohim / the LORD of the Old Testament became a man; that is, Theos appeared on earth, in space and time, as a living, breathing, flesh and blood human being -- a man (anthropos) called "*the Christ*."

Forget alien sightings and invasions. Nothing in history compares to that day when Theos entered history in and through the Son in Bethlehem around 2 BC.

That Theos appeared in a human body with a human nature is the MEGA TRUTH of the gospel. This fact became the pillar of the gospel, and the theme of Renaissance Christmas Art and historical Christmas carols.

(2) The second fact regarding this mega mystery is that Christ was "justified in the Spirit . . ."

The legal, court-room word "*justified*" means "*to declare righteous*," or "to declare authentic, genuine, or real." In law, we demand verification, confirmation, validation, authentication, endorsement, and certification of all kinds of truth claims, real estate transactions, and money matters involving controversy.

What could be more controversial than Jesus is God, born of a virgin, died for our sins, and rose from the dead?

Any megalomaniac can claim to be God, but where is the evidence?

Pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act (5 USCS 556 (d)) the proponent of a rule or order has the burden of proof.

Hearsay, wishes, hopes, presumption, theory, and opinion are not accepted as facts in a court of law.

*Rule 301. Presumptions in Civil Cases Generally*

*In a civil case, unless a federal statute or these rules provide otherwise, the party against whom a presumption is directed has the burden of producing evidence to rebut the presumption. But this rule does not shift the burden of persuasion, which remains on the party who has it originally.*

Our Lord not only claimed to be God, He provided proof of claim with strict proof of claim -- even *infallible proof of claim* (Acts 1:3).

His miracles were His credentials. Only God can turn water into wine, heal the sick, and walk on water. Out of death, the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead vindicating His claim that He is God, that He is Lord over the grave.

Over 500 witnesses testified to a real, tangible, historical encounter with the living Christ. Thus, the phrase "*justified in the Spirit*" announces lawyer-like verification for Divine assertions.

That Jesus is God is an absurdity . . . without substantial proof of claim. The miracles of our Lord and especially His resurrection from the dead is the Spirit's proof of claim -- His legal verification that Christ is indeed Theos, very God of God, in human flesh.

*Romans 1:4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:*

C.S. Lewis, the great English literary genius said it like this,

*"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."*— C.S. Lewis, [\*Mere Christianity\*](#)

(3) The third fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was "seen of angels . . ."

Can you think of anything on this earth that might be of interest to angels?

To my knowledge, I've never encountered an angel. And, I can't think of anything in American politics that would attract angels: WWI, WWII, 9-11?

But, the day that God became a man excited the angelic mind. The incarnation was like the Superbowl of history and every angel wanted a ticket to the main event.

So great was the Divine visitation to earth, Angels fell from skies like falling stars with wonderment and power to assist Christ in the grandeur and glory of His advent, temptations, ministry, crucifixion, and guardianship of His tomb. See: Luke 2:9-13; Luke 22:43; Luke 24:4; Hebrews 1:6; Matthew 4:11; John 20:11-12.

The modern mind would do well to take an interest in that which captures the attention of angels.

(4) The fourth fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was "Preached unto the Gentiles . . ."

The Apostle places preaching of the historicity of Christ among the "great" (mega) things which constituted the "*mystery*" of Divine truth.

By preaching, the Apostle is not referring to well-prepared sermons, but the factual reporting of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ with conviction and confidence as the newsworthy event in the hostile climate of the first century. This "*preaching*" was the opposite of fake news by the fake media as it was characterized by formality, gravity, and authority (Strong).

Consider the adversarial environment in which these historical events took place. It would have been natural for the early disciples to go *sub silentio* and remain mute. But, they didn't. The only ones remaining silent were the hostile witnesses (the Pharisees). The disciples possessed a conviction that what they saw and heard was as real as a smile that brightens your day. They could not help but proclaim the facts of Christ's victorious history. That these fantastic claims were preached at all was a miracle of miracles. After all, you could get jailed, stoned, or crucified for preaching a message that challenged the authority of Caesar. Stephen comes to mind (Acts 6:1ff; 4:12; 17:6-7).

Second, the message was not only preached to Jews, it was preached to all the nations hugging the Mediterranean -- the world jury hearing the facts of the Case.

Before our Lord's advent, a wall of partition divided the Jewish and Gentile world. In Christ's gospel, we find that the playing field for salvation was leveled for Jews and Greeks, rich and poor, men and women, slaves and free men. What Jewish man in his right mind would extend this gospel of hope to Gentiles? None, unless the message had been justified by the Spirit.

No wonder Paul listed the preaching of this gospel as a mega event in the first century! See Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 1:26-27; Colossians 4:3.

(5) The fifth fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was "believed on in the world . . ."

Jesus said to his disciples, "*You are my witnesses . . .*" (Acts 1:8) . . . and, witnesses must be cross-examined and directly interrogated to test the credibility of the witness and the truth of his testimony.

The gospel message was not preached in "safe zones" or "free speech cages" in back alleys or in government-approved amphitheaters. It was preached to juries in the market places of the Roman world mano y mano among Jews and Greeks competent to judge faith claims and to cross-examine the witnesses.

The Apostles announced the hope of salvation among the Gentiles. . . . and the reasonable, serious Romans and Greeks examined the evidence for the resurrection of Christ and believed the gospel.

While extraordinary claims demand proof of claim, they do not demand extraordinary evidence. This disciples used the same rules of evidence that we use today. What did you see? What did you hear? What did you feel and touch? (1 John 1:1-3).

The early disciples considered themselves witnesses of the Christ event. They were not fideists who believed faith operated apart from facts and reason. Thomas said he would NOT believe until he could place his fingers in the wounds of Christ. Thomas was not being an ornery doubter or skeptic. He was a normal, empirical man who rejected the fantastic and hearsay regarding a resurrected human being. The burden of proof rested on the claimant and he refused to believe until he could personally verify the claim with his five senses (John 20:24-29).

The Apostle identifies faith ("believed") in this incredible message as something remarkable among pragmatic, coherent, thinking men prone to shun outrageous claims. Belief in this mystery shows the accuracy of the testimonies and the power of the truth to convince the most skeptical but honest mind.

(6) The sixth fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was "received up into glory."

Concerning the ascension, Paul identifies it as the punctuation mark of the great mega mystery of all time.

Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus was taken up into heaven in the sight of his disciples. His ascension and session at the right hand of the Father as the exalted Christ ended the earthly history of our Lord.

While the story provides a nice ending to an incredible event, people do not normally levitate off the earth without some modern rocket-propulsion system. Even though such an event is highly improbable, the witnesses said this is the way Jesus left earth (Acts 1-2:30-32).

Thus, the ascension of Christ and His session at the right hand of God not only concludes the historical account of the great mystery of godliness, the Bible pictures it as a kingly coronation where the triumphant Savior receives a golden crown. Having accomplished eternal redemption for all mankind, He now sits on the eternal throne as "Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

With this good news, you don't want to be a person who is absorbed in science fiction, extraterrestrials, and alien-invasion theories to annihilate the human race only to miss the *one, true, historically, verifiable visitation of Theos in history in and through His Son*. Forget aliens! Investigate the Christ event!

The context of this passage is the previous verse:

***1 Timothy 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.***

Every Christian church has the potential to be a "*pillar and ground of the truth*."

Paul anticipated a delay in his visit to Timothy, and informs him of his purpose in writing his letter: "that thou mayest know," a hina clause with a subjunctive holding out the possibility that Timothy and his readers might come to a full knowledge on how men "ought" (de) to behave themselves "*in the house of God*."

The "*house of God*" would be a church gathering, not a church building. A true church doesn't practice social distancing. Healthy Christians don't self-quarantine.

The word "*conduct*" or "*behave*" comes from the Greek word anestrepho which means to "turn up side down" or "turn up and down."

Christianity has a code of conduct which is accurately portrayed in chapter 3:1-14. A true believer changes his ways, his dress, his attitudes, his demeanor, and his habits when he or she takes up the cross to follow Christ.

Paul established Christian ethics consistent with the law of the LORD God (Romans 13:10).

He commands believers to put off the old and put on the new in Ephesians 4:21-24.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul orders men to remove their headwear and for women to veil themselves when meeting in the house of God to remember the headship and history of Christ and the cross (1 Corinthians 11).

In 1 Timothy, faithful men are exhorted to pray with clean hands (2:8), and women are commanded to dress modestly and take on the role of a student.

In chapter three, the apostle lists the virtues that must mark elders and deacons in pursuit of Divine interests.

In chapter four, Paul exhorts Timothy to avoid (Jewish) myths (fake history) and to train himself in godliness (4:7). If Godly commands like these were put into practice, it would turn the average American church upside down . . . or is that "right side up?"

If you want to be Godly, don't look in and in and in. Forget New Age Meditations influenced by Eastern philosophy, mysticism, yoga, Hinduism and Buddhism. Rather, look at the glory of our Lord.

*"But we all, with open face beholding (present middle participle) as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed (metamorphoo) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).*

*"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).*

Change comes when we see and treasure the mystery of godliness of the Lord Jesus.

Amen!

## 31. THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S HISTORY

Liberal scholars have suggested that Christ did not create the church, but the church created Christ; that after decades of nothingness this parochial Judahite evolved into a giant mythological miracle-working rabbi. Lesser minds have suggested that Christ never existed at all, and that He was merely a mirage in the minds of religious fanatics. But, greater minds realize that history is really His Story.

*Christianity is not a doctrine, not truth as truth, but the knowledge of a Person; it is knowing the Lord Jesus. You cannot be educated into being a Christian. -- T. Austin-Sparks, Scotland.*

When Paul addressed the Corinthians, he reminded them of the gospel He preached:

***1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you . . . that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time . . .***

Paul's gospel was the good news that Jesus' history was certain and true; that He lived in time and space; that He died on a real, wooden, splintery cross; that He was buried in a cold Jewish tomb, and that He literally, tangibly rose from the dead. A man alive after death: this is, indeed, good news! If Jesus historically triumphed over the grave, then He has solved man's fundamental problem- death! It is, therefore, good news that Christ lived, died, and rose again in history.

When the OT closes, we are left with unfulfilled promises, unfulfilled expectations, and unexplained ceremonies.

The NT opens with the critical claim of "*fulfillment*" (plhro,w).

Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Matthew 1:22 Isaiah's prophecy about the virgin was fulfilled (Isaiah 7:13-14).

Matthew 2:15 Hosea's prophecy is fulfilled (Hosea 14:1).

Matthew 2:17Jeremiah's/Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled. (Isaiah 53:3).

Matthew 3:15Righteousness is fulfilled.

Matthew 4:14 Isaiah's prophecy about Zebulun was fulfilled (Isaiah 7:1ff)

Matthew 5:17 The law is fulfilled.

Matthew 8:17 Isaiah's prophecy about Christ was fulfilled (Isaiah 53)

Matthew 12:18 Isaiah 42 was fulfilled.



The NT era was **not** an era of passing shadows, but of fulfillment. The following represents Christ as the embodiment of OT expectations.

### **CHRIST IS GOD'S NEW CREATION**

Two major events in the Old Testament dominate OT themes: (a) the creation and (b) the exodus. The OT creation was God's masterpiece, but on the day Adam sinned, all creation fell with him (Romans 5:11ff). The prophets gave hope by testifying to a day when God would renew the creation. This hope was closely connected to the kingdom of God. Christ, however, is God's *New Creation*. He has become Head not only of this earthly creation, but of God's new creation, the church (Colossians 1:15-16). Our Lord is the lawful Head of the church—**not** the pope, **not** a pastor, **not** the government, **not** the IRS.

**Figure 7: Christ the New Creation**

| OT CREATION                             | NT CREATION AND CHRIST   |
|---|--|
| Spirit moved on the face of the waters  | The Spirit shall overshadow you                                |
| Genesis 1:2                             | Luke 1:35  |
| The Spirit of God moved upon the waters | The Spirit created the humanity of Christ                      |
| Adam was the head of creation           | Christ is the head of the new creation<br>(Colossians 1:15-18) |

### **CHRIST IS THE NEW ADAM**

What Adam was to the human race (head), Christ is more to the chosen race (Head of the Church). While the first Adam failed, the Second Adam succeeded.

- The Spirit created Adam; the Holy Spirit created Jesus' humanity (Matthew 1:18).
- Adam was the first man in this earthly humanity; Christ is the first resurrected man in the new humanity (1 Corinthians 15:20).
- Adam was given authority over this creation; Christ is given authority over the new creation (Colossians 1:17, 18).
- Adam was given the dominion mandate to rule ("Let man rule over . . ." Genesis 1:26) and Christ expanded the dominion mandate to "Go and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:18-20).
- Adam's disobedience was imputed to the human race; Christ's obedience was imputed to believers, the new race among humanity (Romans 5:18).
- Christ is the Second Adam that heads a race of humanity destined to share the eternal kingdom in resurrected bodies.

### **CHRIST IS THE NEW MOSES**

A new exodus called for a new Leader. Moses was the great prophet who led Israel out of Egypt; and, Moses said God would raise up another Prophet like himself. Christ is the New Moses that leads His people out of the bondage of sin and death. Through his death, burial, and resurrection, He leads spiritual Israel across the great, glassy sea (Revelation 15:2).

- Like Moses, Jesus was the prophet “like me” (Deuteronomy 18:15; Acts 3:22, 23: 7:37).
- Like Moses, Jesus had a bounty on his head (Matthew 2:1-13).
- Like Moses, Jesus was hid from the wrath of the king (Matthew 2:13).
- Like Moses who was not recognized for his greatness by his contemporaries, Jesus was not recognized for His importance by his people (Luke 5:21).
- Like Moses who had special access to God, Jesus enjoyed a unique fellowship with God (John 11:42).
- Like Moses received the Law on the MT. Sinai, Jesus gave Israel His Law on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).
- Like Moses fasted for 40 days, so Jesus fasted for 40 days (Matthew 4).
- Like Moses appointed 70 elders, Jesus appointed 70 missionaries (Luke 10:1).
- Like Moses received glory on the mountain, Jesus was transfigured on a mountain (Matthew 17).
- Like Moses fed the people Manna, Jesus multiplied the loaves of bread to feed the people (John 6:35). Like Moses gave the people the water of life in the desert to quench Israel's thirst, Jesus is the water of life that supplies eternal life for man's soul (John 7:38).
- Like Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so Israel could be healed, Jesus was lifted up at Calvary for the healing (salvation) of men's souls (John 3:14).
- Like Moses burial place was obscure and hidden, so Jesus' body, by virtue of His resurrection, was nowhere to be located near the place of his death.

### **CHRIST IS THE LEADER OF A NEW EXODUS**

Moses marvelously led Israel out of Egypt, but Christ is the leader of the new Exodus, the journey out of sin and death (Romans 5:21). When Christ was on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:31), Jesus spoke about his “*decease*” or literally “*the decease or departure of him*” with Moses and Elijah. The word translated “decease” is the Greek word *exodon*, which is our English word “exodus.” Luke's choice of words is not by accident. Jesus was to accomplish the true exodus at Jerusalem. In and through His redemptive death and resurrection, Christ would lead His people out of Egypt (the land of slavery and death) into the true Promise Land (heaven itself).

The old exodus was a glorious redemption, but it only pointed to a new exodus -- the exodus out of this world dominated by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (Galatians 1:4).

The OT called for a new Exodus (Isaiah 51:9), and in Christ, God laid bare his arm (rolled up his sleeves) and went to work to redeem His people from death and destruction. All were surprised that God's power resided in a "*tender shoot out of dry ground*," but that Tender Shoot became the means of man's salvation (Isaiah 53:1).

The sending out of the 70 (Luke 10:1) typified the Exodus experience (Numbers 11:16ff) — a new conquest of Canaan; a conquest of the hearts and souls of men in the proclamation of the gospel. While Israel failed their tests in the wilderness, Christ passed His temptation with glory and grandeur (Luke 4:1ff).

### **CHRIST IS OUR PASSOVER**

Christians do not celebrate the Passover, they celebrate Christ, *Yeshua Hamashiah*, who is "*our Passover sacrificed for us*" (1 Corinthians 5:7). The lamb's blood protected residents in the blood-splattered homes from the death angel that slew the firstborn of Egypt, but Christ's blood "*takes away sins*" and protects us from eternal punishment (Hebrews 10:4) -- to save those who take shelter from God's wrath under the blood of Jesus. The former saved Israelites in time, but the latter saves all Christians for all eternity. One was a shadow; the other the reality. We do not celebrate the shadow, we rejoice in and celebrate the bright light of fulfillment. We do not practice the Seder; Rather, we remember Him in the breaking of bread, the "*Lamb without blemish or defect . . . chosen before the creation of the world*" to protect us from wrath and judgment (1 Peter 1:19, 20).

Likewise, with all of Israel's festivals: Christ is the fulfillment of every feast.

- He is our Feast of Firstfruits (Bikkurim), "the Firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20); and,
- He is our Feast of Unleaven Bread—"the bread of life" (John 6:35); and,
- He is our Pentecost and Lawgiver and "end of the law" and our Boaz and the One to Whom the Ruach K'doshen unites believers into one body (Isaiah 22:33; Romans 10:4); and,
- He is our Feast of Trumpets and Head of the New Creation and the one to whom all believers are gathered, our Rosh Hashannah, and our Isaac; and,
- He is our Yom Kippur and Atonement and Propitiation; and,
- He is our *Succoth* who tabernacled among men (John 1:14) and the ultimate Temple in the New Jerusalem -- "*for the Lord God Almighty and Lamb are the temple thereof*" (Revelation 21:22).

Christians do not go back to *the weak and beggarly* elements of Israel's festivals except as a tool to broaden our perspective on the glories of Christ and His marvelous accomplishments. He is the meaning of all of Israel's festivals. These are "*a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ*" (Colossians 2:16-17).

### **CHRIST IS THE NEW ISRAEL**

Israel means "*prince with God*." The nation took its name from Jacob who was renamed "*Israel*." The nation was promised that they would be God's special treasure (Exodus 19:5). But, the promise was

conditioned upon Israel's obedience. As history unfolded and Israel began to disobey God's laws, she forfeited her right to the promises. But, God provided the real Prince, a new King, the Prototype of the type. He prevailed. Because Jesus obeyed God's law, He became God's special treasure and inherited all of Israel's promises. All who place their faith in Christ as their Representative join the Messianic community, and they become a member of the New Israel, the true people of God.

- Jesus is the Prototype, the true Israel; Jacob was a type; the shadow of the true Israel of God.
- Israel was a descent of Abraham; Jesus was the true Seed promised to Abraham.
- Israel was called YHWH's "firstborn;" Jesus is God's firstborn (Colossians 1:15, 16).
- Israel was delivered out of Egypt; Jesus was called up out of Egypt (Matthew 2:15).
- Israel passed through the waters of the Red Sea and through the River Jordan to enter the land of Canaan to take possession of Canaan (Joshua 3): Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan and later passed through the rivers of death and emerged victorious over this enemy (Romans 6:7-8).
- Israel was tested in the wilderness for 40 years and failed; Jesus was tested in the wilderness of Judea for 40 days and passed the test (Matthew 4:1ff).
- Unlike Israel who failed God's time of testing, Christ fulfilled the law. He accomplished Israel's obligations to God. In his life, He was Israel's Representative and fulfilled Israel's covenant responsibilities to God. In His death, he removed the curse of covenant breaking by becoming a curse for them (Galatians 3:1-14). In His glorification, all believers in Israel will share in the glory and blessing of His covenant accomplishments.
- Not only is Christ Israel's Representative and means of obeying God's law for them; He is God's Representative (Mediator), the means or locus of covenant blessings promised to Israel by God if they obeyed Him. So, in Christ, believing Jews become members of the spiritual Israel (true Israel or the New Israel which is composed of Christ and the community of the redeemed -- Romans 9:6).
- Israel entered their inheritance in Canaan. Following Jesus' second baptism of suffering and blood, he entered into glory, the heavenly Canaan.
- Unlike Israel, who complained in the wilderness, Jesus stood His ground saying, "Not my will, but thy will be done" (Matthew 26:42)
- Israel received the law, the objective standard of God's will; Jesus is the fulfillment of the law, the subjective standard of God's will (Romans 10:4; Matthew 4:17). The Jews received the law on "Pentecost;" the disciples first received the Holy Spirit on the memorial Day of Pentecost who enables believers to keep the law (Romans 8:4).
- Matthew presents Jesus as the True Seed of Abraham (Chapter one). Christ is the One through whom the world is to be blessed. Matthew closes his book with Jesus' command to go into the world and make disciples of all nations. If Jesus is the one through whom the promise is being fulfilled, then he can lay claim to being Abraham's true descendant -- the true Israel of God. Jesus is the true Israel because He did everything Israel was supposed to do (Galatians 3:14).

### PILLAR THREE: THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S HISTORY

- Matthew presents Jesus as the Son of David. As Israel's king, Christ represents true Israel (Matthew 1:1ff).
- From our perspective, Jesus' genealogy makes him the last Jew to whom we can truly trace ancestry. No living person (even Jews by faith) today can honestly conclude his own lineage from Abraham. Even if a modern day "Jew" claimed to be the Christ in the future, there is no way to verify his claim. But, with Christ there is.
- Jesus is called the "Servant of the Lord." "He was made a "covenant" for the people. In Isaiah 42:1ff, distinguishing between the Messianic Servant and Israel as the Servant is at times difficult to determine. Isaiah obviously intended for us to understand the Servant of the Lord as the true Israel.
- Israel had a temple, but Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT temple as the Spirit of God inhabited His body (John 1:14-18; 2:19-20; Colossians 2:9).
- Israel was promised the Land of Canaan; Jesus is the Promised Land and anyone "in Christ" is in the Land of Milk and Honey.

A person who believes in the Son is in Christ is a member of the True Israel of God; if a Jew or any man for that matter does not abide in the Son, he is NOT part of Israel. A person who claims to be a part of Israel by virtue of the Jewish faith or by bloodline is deceived (Matthew 3:1-10). Only those who trust Christ are part of the true Israel of God (Romans 9: 6). The one "in Christ" will "inherit these things" including the "new heavens and the new earth."

#### **CHRIST IS THE NEW TORAH**

The Torah was a true but incomplete expression of God's righteousness; Jesus is God's perfect and complete expression of God's righteousness. The law was an objective representation of God's character; Jesus is God's subjective representation of His character. Israel was graced with the Torah, but Jesus is *the Living Torah* -- the perfect reflection of God's attributes. Only Jesus could say, "*But I say unto you . . .*" (Matthew 5:32).

He taught as if He was in authority and in total command of the Torah. He came not to destroy the Torah, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). He taught as Israel's new Law-giver (Matthew 7:29) and He chided men for placing tradition (man's law order) as a priori over the commandments of God (Matthew 15:3). He is the "end of the law" (Romans 10:4); that is the completion, fulfillment, perfection, and pinnacle of the Torah. His obedience to the law on and behalf of the sinner saves the believer. Because Christ is the New Torah, we are saved by works—His works as our Representative before the Father.

#### **CHRIST IS THE NEW JOSHUA**

The name "*Jesus*" (with a German "J") is a translation of the Greek name, *Iesous*, which means "Savior" or "Yeshua" (Hebrew) or "Yah is salvation." The name "*Jesus*" is a declaration that He is the ultimate Salvation of God's people. General Joshua led Israel to a great but temporary victory in Canaan over the Late Bronze Canaanites. Jesus as the New Commander and Chief of God's people died for sins. With sin propitiated, the debt is paid. Christ gives the true people of God eternal rest from their fears and labors in the House of God by virtue of their faith in *Iesous* —the greater Joshua (Hebrews 4).

#### **CHRIST IS THE NEW PRIESTHOOD**

OT priests worked day and night in the ministry of reconciliation. Despite all the priests, and all the work, and all the sacrifices offered, those priests were unable to perfect the people of God. But, Jesus, a priest of the order of Melchizedek, has succeeded in interceding for true Israel based on His superior ministry, superior covenant, superior sacrifice, and superior priesthood (Hebrews 5:1ff).

### **CHRIST IS THE NEW TEMPLE**

Aaron served in the earthly tabernacle “*pitched by men*,” but Christ serves in the heavenly sanctuary built by the Lord (Hebrews 8-9). The earthly tabernacle was temporary, but the heavenly temple is eternal. The earthly priests were imperfect men, but our Great High Priest is perfect; the earthly priest’s work was never finished, but Christ’s work is complete, once for all (Hebrew 10). The earthly temple belonged to Israel, but the New Temple belongs to all men who believe regardless of their ethnicity. The earthly temple was temporary and merely a shadow of good things to come; but, the heavenly temple is permanent and truly a fulfillment of good things promised. Further, He is our temple, and we are in Him; and, He in us. In the eternal city, John declares, “*I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple*” (Revelation 21:22).

### **CHRIST IS THE NEW SACRIFICE**

Every year thousands of lambs, goats, and bulls were offered on the brazen altar. But, none of them or the whole of them could take away sin. But, Christ’s one sacrifice covers sins forever; cleanses the conscience forever; and perfects the elect forever (Hebrews 9, 10). While the OT sacrifices secured a temporary benefit for Israel, the NT reveals that Christ’s sacrifice “obtained eternal redemption (ransom or release from debt)” (9:12).

### **CHRIST IS SUPERIOR TO ALL SHADOWS**

The Apostle Paul’s ministry was dogged by Judaizers who marshaled a retreat from the High Land of Christ to hunker down to a lower position in the shadows of the lowlands of Jewish tradition. The Book of Hebrews exposes the inferiority of Israel’s shadows and the folly of following apostates by revealing the superior Person and Position of the Lord Jesus over all of Israel’s holy people and sacred institutions. He is the substance (1:3) of the OT shadows:

- Christ is superior to the angels (Hebrews 1).
- Christ is superior to Adam the representative man (Hebrews 2).
- Christ is superior to Moses the great law-giver (Hebrews 3).
- Christ is superior to Joshua the great military leader (Hebrews 4).
- Christ is a superior Priest to Aaron (Hebrews 5).
- Christ is in a superior Priesthood to that of the Aaronic Priesthood (Hebrews 7).
- Christ serves in a superior tabernacle—the true tabernacle built by God (Hebrews 8:1-6).
- Christ is the mediator of a superior covenant (Hebrews 8:7ff)
- Christ is the superior sacrifice that perfects the sinner (Hebrews 9, 10).

- Christ is superior to the Torah as Advocate of those who trust Him (Hebrews 10:19-39).

**Christ is the meaning of the Old Testament.** All the types, promises, and demands of moral law find their complete and perfect fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. Adam, Moses, the exodus, the sacrifices, the feasts, the law, the priesthood, the offerings, and the temple are shadows (tupos) of a greater reality—Christ, the Son of God.

In other words, the tabernacle, the law, and the shadows do not come first, but second in the Divine mind. All reflect first principles -- that which was Christ Himself. *He is First who is before all things, that He might have preeminence in all things* (Colossians 1:17, 18).

Few among us realize the greatness and magnificence of Christ and how He is the culmination of every promise, every hope, every prophetic utterance, every king, every sacrifice, every law, and every feast. The NT Christians faced the constant threat of retreat from Christ back into the OT laws or feasts (Galatians). In the modern world, Christians are seeing believers plunge into secularism and humanism because they are unable to grasp the splendor and wonder of the Savior. Many believers are playing in the shadows keeping feasts and festivals when they should be walking in the light. We cannot do better than to reflect on Christ as the meaning of the Old Testament and to remember Him in the “Breaking of Bread”—the one and only feast for Christians (1 Corinthians 11:23ff)!

## **32. THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S BIRTH**

Man has always longed for a God who is visible and tangible. Man's idolatrous nature has carved wood and molded metal into images that represent his own frail conception of the Divine Being. Job complained, “*Behold, I go forward, but he is not there.*” Philip uttered, “Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us.” God's answer to the universal longing to know what God is really like is the incarnation.

Anselm, in his *Cur Deus Homo*, reviewed four ways in which God can make a man (Sanders, 1971, p. 26):

- By natural conception- a man and a woman.
- Without the agency of man or woman- as Adam.
- A man without a woman- as Eve.
- Through Divine empowerment- as Abraham and Sarah.

If these are admitted, it should be no problem to believe that Jesus could be born without the union of a man and a woman, that He was begotten of the Holy Ghost.

**The Kenosis (Berkoff, 1993, p. 327):**

*Kenotic* theories, the emptying of Christ (Philippians 2:5-12), developed around the 19th century, particularly by the Germans. Kenosis theories were an effort to do full justice to the reality and integrity of the manhood of Christ and to stress the magnitude of His self-denial and self-sacrifice. But, some

developments skewed the true meaning of the kenosis of Christ. The great question is: “*What did Christ give up when He became a man?*”

**Lutherans:** Lutherans teach that the attributes of one nature are ascribed to another by actual transference so that unity can be achieved. The term *kenosis* denoted His self-limitation, not of the Logos, but of the God-man, whereby he laid aside the use of His divine attributes.

**The Kenoticists** conceived that Christ was denuded of His transitive attributes, was reduced to a mere potentiality; and then, in union with the human nature, developed again into a divine-human person.

**Thomasius, Delitzsch, and Crosby**<sup>22</sup>: This theory divides God’s attributes into two types: the essential attributes (personal), the non-essential (infinite). These teachers assert that the Logos laid aside his infinite attributes to take unto Himself veritable human nature.

**Gess and H.W. Beecher:** “La Touche speaks of it as incarnation by divine suicide” (Berkoff, 1993, p. 327). The Logos, in becoming man, divested Himself of all His divine attributes and depotentiated Himself of His cosmic function and eternal consciousness during His earthly life.

**Ebrard:** The Logos took the place of the human soul. The eternal Son gave up the form of eternity, and in full self-limitation assumed the existence-form of a human life center. But he did retain some of the divine properties appropriate for the human mode.

**Martensen and Gore:** Christ postulated the existence of a double life in the incarnate Logos from two non-communicating life-centers. As a depotentiated Logos united with human nature, He knew nothing of His Trinitarian and cosmic functions

**Stockton:** In becoming man, Christ divested Himself of His glory, those esthetic attributes characteristic of God in the spirit on His throne, but not His deity. He yielded His sovereignty to become a bond-servant; His divine prerogatives were exchanged for submission.

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS OF THE INCARNATION**

The word “*kenosis*” comes from Philippians 2:7 (evke,nwsen, *ekenosen*), and it is translated “*emptied himself*.”

**Dr. Warfield** calls this a mistranslation. The word is found in four other places (Romans 4:14; 1 Corinthians 1:17; 9:15; 11 Corinthians 9:3). In all these other places it means “*to make void*,” “*of no account*,” or “*of no reputation*.” In reference to Christ, His *kenosis* means that he divested Himself of His divine prerogatives. In taking the form of a servant, he became the tail and not the head, the follower and not the leader.

- Romans 4:14 Faith was in danger of being made empty of meaning.

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<sup>22</sup> For statements of this theory, see Thomasius, Christ Person und Werk 2 : 233-235, 542-550; Delitzsch, Biblischen Psychologie, 323-333; Howard Crosby, in Bap. Quar., 1870 : 350-363—a discourse subsequently published in a separate volume, with the title: The True Humanity of Christ, and reviewed by Shedd, in Presb. Revelation, April, 1881 : 429-431. Crosby emphasizes the word “became,” in John 1: 14—“and the Word became flesh”—and gives the word “flesh” the sense of “man,” or “human.” Crosby, then, should logically deny, though he does not deny, that Christ’s body was derived from the Virgin.



- 1 Corinthians 1:17 The cross was in danger of being emptied of meaning.
- 1 Corinthians 9:15 Paul's boast was in danger of being rendered meaningless.
- 1 Corinthians 9:3 Paul's boast was in danger of being rendered meaningless.

The term “*form of God*” (morph/| qeou/, *morphe theou*) refers to the existence of God. But *ekenosen* does not refer to the “*form*,” but to “*His being on an equality with God*” (ei=nai i;sa qew/| ( *einai isa theos*).

**Berkoff** says, “The fact that Christ took the form of a servant does not involve a laying aside the fundamental form of God. There was no exchange of the divine form for the human form (p. 328).

### **A THEOLOGY OF THE INCARNATION**

**The incarnation is about God in human flesh.** The birth of Christ means that the Son of God became a human being (John 1:1, 14). We call this “*the incarnation*.” It was the Son who assumed human nature, not the Father, or the Spirit. It is better to say “*the Word became flesh than God became flesh*” (Berkhof, 1993, p. 333).

The incarnation assumes the preexistence of the Son:

*The “pre-existent Son of God assumes human nature and takes to Himself human flesh and blood . . .” (Berkhof, 1993, p. 333).*

It is not possible to speak of the incarnation if pre-existence were not assumed (2 Corinthians 8:9; John 6:38; Philippians 2:6, 7).

**The incarnation means that sin was real.** Would the Son have assumed a human nature if sin had not entered the world? Or, if sinners did not really need to be redeemed? Thomas Aquinas advanced the position that sin is the reason for the incarnation. Rupert of Deutz and Alexander of Hales advanced the former position. The reformers agreed with Aquinas. Scripture supports the reason for the incarnation as being rooted in the sin of man and the necessity of redemption (1 Corinthians 15:45ff; Ephesians 1:10, 21-23; 5:31, 32; Colossians 1:15ff).

**The incarnation does not mean “change.”** The Word still possessed his essential being. The Greek verb “*evge,neto*”/ *egeneto* (John 1:14) does not mean “change” but “became.” Thus His nature was **not** altered. Berkoff says *flesh does not imply just a body, but a human nature with body and soul* (1993, p. 334).

**The incarnation means Christ has become a member of the human race.** The Anabaptist argued that Christ brought his body (substance) from heaven and not from Mary. The problem with this view is that it makes Christ a “new creation” unidentified with the human race.

**The incarnation means a supernatural event occurred in history.** The supernatural event was His incarnation, **not** his birth. He was conceived miraculously “*of the Holy Ghost*,” but He was born naturally of Mary. He had a *miraculous conception*, but he did **not** have a miraculous birth.

**The incarnation assumes two works of the Spirit:** (a) The Holy Spirit conceived Christ in the womb of Mary; and, (b) the Holy Spirit superintended the conception to prevent the contamination of sin.

**The incarnation was a part of the humiliation of Christ** in that the Logos became human flesh (Philippians 2:6-13).

The incarnation means the fulfillment of prophecy.

- Micah 5:2 - Christ was born in Bethlehem
- Hosea 11:1 - Just as Israel was called out of Egypt, Christ as the true Israel was also called out of Egypt.
- Matthew 2:23 - He would be called a Nazarene. This name could refer to a cultural symbol of rejection or of something worthless (Psalm 22:6-8; 69:8, 9; Isaiah 53:1-6), or this prediction could be a general prophetic reference. Pixner (1992, p. 14) refers to St. Jerome (A.D. 349-419) and says that the word Nazarene could refer to the Hebrew word *netzer* from Isaiah 11:1, which means "shoot." If so, the title Natzorean / Nazarene alludes not so much to Jesus' home town or to His rejection, but to his royal descent; i.e. His Davidic lineage.
- Isaiah 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch (rc,nE, *netzer*) shall grow out of his roots:
- Revelation 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root (h` r`i,za, riza) and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

When the beggar Bartimaeus asked the crowd who was coming, the throng said *Jesus ho Nazoraios* (Vl̥sou/j o` Nazarhno,), and Bartimaeus began crying out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me" inferring that the use of Nazarene was a reference to *Jesus, the root of David* (Mark 19:47).

**Pixner** (Pixner, 1992, p. 15) reports that in 1962 a fragment of a marble plaque was discovered which contained a list of priestly families who settled in Galilee during the late Roman era. They discovered those who settled in the region were originally from the family of *netzet* which means *shoot* or *scion*. Authors preferred the spelling of Nazareth rather than *netzer* (shoot, scion).

Jesus grew up in the town called Nazareth, *Nazara* (Little-Netzer). It acquired its name from a Davidic clan that returned from Babylon around 100 B.C. (Pixner, 1992, p. 16). The old settlement was established in the Late Bronze Period, but apparently was deserted around 722 B.C. when Tiglath-Pileser III, the Assyrian General, invaded Galilee. Most exiles were transported into Assyrian provinces and replaced with other conquered peoples. At this time, Galilee became a territory inhabited by Gentiles.

That Mary was a virgin was **not** unique; **all** noble women in Israel were virgins when married; but, that she was pregnant while a virgin was not only extraordinary but quintessential for Christ to be the Savior of mankind.

**The incarnation demands a virgin birth.** His birth fulfilled the prophecy that Christ would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2); that Christ would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14), and that Christ was the "*shoot*" of Isaiah 11:1. The virgin birth means that Christ was born without a sinful nature qualifying him to be the sin-bearer for the entire world.

- *The theological reason:* The virgin birth was necessary so the sin of Adam would not be passed on to Jesus (Romans 5:12ff).

- *The prophetic reason:* The virgin birth was necessary for the fulfillment of prophecy (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:13-14).
- The linguistic reason: The virgin birth was necessary for linguistic precision: The Greek word for virgin is *parthenos* (h' parqe,nos). In Hebrew, one of two words could have been used: (a) *almah* (hm'l.(:), which means “maiden,” or young unmarried woman, or (b) *be thulah* (hl'ŠWtB.), which refers to an unmarried woman or to an unmarried widow (Joel 21:8). Isaiah uses *almah* which refers to a young woman of marriageable age. Although *almah* does not explicitly denote virginity. Translating the term *almah* as *virgin* stresses the supernatural element. It is used in six other places, but never in any other sense than an unmarried maiden. The LXX uses the word *parthenos*. Luther once said,

*“If a Jew or a Christian can prove to me that in any other passage of Scripture almah means a married woman, I will give him a hundred florins, although God alone knows where I may find them” (Sanders, 1971, p. 27).*

The promise was given to King Ahab, and appears to have an immediate fulfillment in relation to the Isaiah's young wife who later gave birth to a son (a natural conception); but, because this passage is quoted by Matthew, the prophecy in Isaiah had in mind a future, specific fulfillment in relation to the Son.

Thus, **the fulfillment is always greater than the promise**. And, this is Matthew's point. The timing of the birth of Isaiah's son was nominal, but it was a phenomenal miracle for Mary (a virgin) to be with child.

*The typological reason:* The virgin birth was necessary for typology: Jesus was the “spotless” Lamb of God (1 Peter 1:18, 19).

- *The textual reason:* The virgin birth was necessary for textual reasons: Matthew says she was with child “before they came together.”
- The historical reason: Jesus had to be born of virgin in order to be free from the curse upon Jeconiah (Matthew 1:11; Jeremiah 22:30).
- The redemptive reason: The virgin birth was necessary for salvation: Only a righteous Savior could die as a substitute for a sinner.
- *The prophetic reason:* The virgin birth is a fulfillment of prophecy (Isaiah 7:14); that is, the fulfillment is greater than the promise; while the promise applied to Isaiah's wife, Matthew sees in the promise the seeds of a virgin birth as applied to Mary.

### **MARY AND THE VIRGIN BIRTH**

By virgin birth, we do **not** infer a “miraculous birth.” His birth was **not** miraculous, but natural. Christ was born like any child would be born.

By virgin birth, we do **not** suggest an “unusual conception” or “miraculous” in the tradition of Sarah or Elizabeth who were past the age of childbearing. Mary's conception was **not** “miraculous” in that tradition because Mary had arrived at child-bearing age.

By virgin birth, we do **not** mean an “immaculate conception” as the Catholic Church teaches. The Catholic doctrine of Immaculate Conception<sup>23</sup> asserts that Mary herself was conceived and born without original sin. The angel Gabriel said, “*Hail, full of grace (kecharitomene), the Lord is with you*” (Luke 1:28). Mary was blessed by God to be the agent of the Son coming into the world. She was a recipient of grace, but **only** the Son was “*full of grace and truth*” (*pleras charitos kai aletheias*) (John 1:1). God was with Mary, but **not** one with her. Only the Logos was with *Theos* and was *Theos* (John 1:1). The dogma of the Immaculate Conception arose from the apotheosis of Mary as the Mother of God within Catholicism. Mary was given the privilege of bearing the Christ child, but she was **not** without original sin. She was pure in the sense she was not promiscuous, but she was not sinless. She gave birth to Jesus who was the Son of God, but she was **not** the Mother of God. This is an overstatement and reading into the text more than is there. Being conceived by the Holy Ghost, the Son was holy, but her own birth was **not** immaculate. Like the rest of humanity, Mary had a human father. She was born a sinner. She also needed a Savior (Luke 1:47). Mary should be respected and honored, but not worshipped and adored. Mariolatry is idolatry.

By virgin birth, we mean that her pregnancy **did not** originate through a sexual union with a man, but originated supernaturally through the work of God's Spirit.

By virgin birth, we mean that His conception was miraculous in that Mary was impregnated by the Holy Spirit without the agency of a mature man. Her conception was a miracle of God; her pregnancy and delivery was a normal, human experience common to women.

### **MARY AS THE “MOTHER OF GOD” AND “INTERCESSOR OF HEAVEN.”**

Mary was blessed because God chose Mary as the mother of the promised Messiah. She was a woman of faith. Her willing submission stands out like white on black. Unfortunately, her importance in divine affairs has grown into mythological proportions. *Mary deserves honor, but **not** worship; respect, but **not** reverence.*

**Mary is not the “mother of God.”** This title is **not** found in Scripture, and it should be abandoned because the term magnifies the importance of Mary and devalues the importance of the Spirit's Creation. God has no mother. God was never born! God has **no** beginning or end. Mary is the mother of the Messiah, but she is **not** *the mother of God*.

Consider the following Catholic creed:

*Immaculate Heart of Mary: “Consecration to the Mother of God,” says Pope Pius XII, “is a total gift of self, for the whole of life and for all eternity; and a gift which is not a mere formality or sentimentality, but effectual, comprising the full intensity of the Christian life — Marian life.” This consecration, the Pope explained, “tends essentially to union with Jesus,*

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<sup>23</sup> The Immaculate Conception according to the Catholic doctrine means that Mary was conceived without original sin or its stain—that's what “immaculate” means: without stain. The essence of original sin consists in the deprivation of sanctifying grace, and its stain is a corrupt nature. Mary was preserved from these defects by God's grace; from the first instant of her existence she was in the state of sanctifying grace and was free from the corrupt nature original sin brings (Catholic Answers; online source at <http://www.catholic.com/tracts/immaculate-conception-and-assumption>).

*under the guidance of Mary.” (Dominican Fathers)(Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary: online source at <http://www.rosary-center.org/consecrt.htm>).*

**Mary was not born sinless.** Like all other girls, she was born a sinner (Romans 3:23). She herself confessed, “*My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior*” (Luke 1:47). Those who believe in the Immaculate Conception believe that Mary was born without original sin and error.

Mary is **not** the *Mother of Mercy* as Mariolators teach. Mercy is the foundation of God’s throne. YHWH (the LORD) **is the Christian’s Source of Mercy** (Psalm 52:8; 59:17; 69:13; 86:15; 89:14).

**Mary did not remain a perpetual virgin after the birth of her son.** At the core of Catholicism is another doctrine of demons (1 Timothy 4:1-2) -- that celibacy is a holy estate; that sexual intercourse between a husband and wife is minutely defiling, sinful, and carnal. The Catholic Church (its bishops) has never been able to fully reconcile sex and holiness. Catholics have pitted sex against holiness; grace against purity; celibacy against marriage; and, the human experience against the transcendent. Guilt for enjoying the sexual experience in marriage plagues many Roman Catholics. Mary was **not** a female celibate **nor** did she begin the first nunnery. After Mary gave birth to Christ, she entered into normal conjugal relations with her husband, Joseph. Then she bore other sons by natural conception.

Furthermore, the Roman Catholic belief that the sons referred to in the following verses are the sons of another Mary is a twisting of Scripture to protect Catholic Maryolatry dogma.

*Matthew 13:55-56 "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? 56 "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" 57 And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his own household."*

*Mark 6:3 "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him. 4 And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his home town and among his own relatives and in his own household."*

**Mary is not a Divine Intercessor.** She should **not** be prayed to. She is **not** divine. She **cannot** hear. She **cannot** answer prayers. *There is only one intercessor between God and men, the man Christ Jesus* (1 Timothy 2:5). Catholics correctly teach the doctrine of the Trinity, but need to be reminded that the Trinity is **not** “Father, Son, and Mary,” but “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.” Prayers such as the following should be forsaken:

*Most compassionate Heart of Mary, Queen of Virgins, watch over my mind and heart and preserve me from the deluge of impurity, which you lamented so sorrowfully at Fatima. I want to be pure like you. I want to atone for the many crimes committed against Jesus and you. I want to call down upon this country and the whole world the peace of God in justice and charity” (Dominican Fathers).*

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. **Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen***” (Hail Mary).

**Mary cannot lead anybody to God or save anybody's soul.** The following is a sample of the kind of error that prevails: "*Our Lady*," say the Catholics, assured Lucy, June 13, 1917:

*I will never abandon you, my child. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God (Fathers).*

Notice **two facts** about the above quotation:

(a) Mary promises to lead people to God. The belief that Mary has anything to do with agency to salvation is not only false, it leads people astray from God's true means of salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ who said, "I am the way . . . *no man comes to the Father, except by me*" (John 14:6); and

(b) by saying, "*My Immaculate Heart*" will be your refuge is another way of saying that "I must change my heart and work my way to heaven," that is, only when I have diligently purified my soul and have a pure heart (by her help) will I go to heaven. Such thinking is very Catholic but wickedly idolatrous.

**The dogma that Mary is the Mother of God and the source of grace has been the product of more than a little evil.** Not only is it Babylonian in its origin; not only did the doctrine originate in Ephesus due to the pagan temple of Diana, it is a "*doctrine of demons*" (1 Timothy 4:1-2)! Its source is **not** Biblical, but demonic! Selah! How many souls have been deceived? How many people are in hell because they trusted Mary instead of Christ? How many families have become *matriarchal* instead *patriarchal*? The professing church today has become effeminate and lost its testosterone in part because of the apotheosis of Mary to the status of Godhood.

**But, Mary is the model, humble, devoted servant** (handmaid) of the Lord. All Christians should admire and esteem her, not as the Mother of God, but as the reverent mother of our Lord. Just as it is an error to worship her, it is an error to depreciate her.

In conclusion, let us not go beyond what is written. Further, let us follow what is written: "Keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:17). Mariolatry is idolatry. Denigration is pride.

### **33. THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S BAPTISM**

*Luke 3:21-22 . . . it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.*

- Christ's baptism signified His last act as a carpenter, and His first act as the Servant of the Lord.
- His baptism announced the beginning of the Messianic Era -- not as a purifying rite. It had a single meaning compared to the double meaning of other people's baptism. To the others, John's baptism signified (a) the abandonment of sins, and (b) their entrance into the Messianic era.
- Jesus' baptism had nothing to do with repentance; it had everything to do with announcing the new era of which He Himself was the Author. The King arrived in history and the kingdom was at hand.

- It represented His complete dedication to be the world's sin-bearer while yielding Himself without reserve to do His Father's will (Sanders, p. 53).
- It represented His identification with John, the believing remnant, and the spiritually responsive in Israel.
- It represented His appointment to the Messianic office as the inaugural postmark for His public ministry.
- It represented His Father's approval, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."
- It represented the Spirit's approval as the Spirit descended upon Him as a Dove.
- It represented His sanctification. He was privately sanctified by the virgin birth, but his baptism was a public act of sanctification; what was true personally, became public knowledge.
- It represented His official anointing, the public inauguration to His Messianic office. Jesus was not anointed with oil—a symbol of the Spirit. Rather, He was anointed with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost descended upon Him. The dove symbolized the nature of His ministry: sensitive, gentle, ministering with persuasion and love rather than power and judgment. Doves are sensitive and very self-protective. This Dove showed complete trust in Christ by descending upon Him.
- His baptism explains His power, His authority, and His amazing ministry.
- His baptism is His inauguration to the Messianic Ministry.
- His baptism testifies to the truth of the Trinity and His place in the Godhead: The Father spoke, the Spirit descended, and the Son stood in the Jordan River.

## 34. THE MEAING OF CHRIST'S TEMPTATION

*Luke 4:1 And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,*

After Jesus' baptism, the Spirit led him into the wilderness of the Judean desert (Mark 1:12). This was the dry, barren wasteland between Jerusalem and Jericho. The word "*led*" (evkba,llei, ekbaino) is an imperfect indicating a durative in the past. It is translated "cast out" or "throw." That is, the Spirit compelled Jesus. The Spirit chose the time and the place, and the Devil chose the nature of the temptation.

**First, the temptation of Christ confronts the Bible student with some tensions within the biblical text.** If our Lord taught the disciples to pray, "*Lead us not into temptation,*" (Matthew 6:13) why then did the Spirit lead our Lord into temptation (Matthew. 4:1; Luke 4:1)? Since James informs us that God cannot be tempted (James 1:13) and we know that Jesus was fully God, how then could He be tempted (Hebrews. 2:18; 4:15)?

Second, from the standpoint of our Lord's Messianic Mission, His entire mission is contingent upon His victory over every temptation of Satan. Jesus was being tested as the "Son of God." He was Israel's Messiah and King. The kingdom of Heaven was at hand. To fail these tests would be to nullify all of God's purposes and promises which were to be realized through the Son of God.

**Third, our Lord's temptation is proof that He was the Son of God, without sin, and qualified to administrate the Messianic era.** There are many lessons connected with the temptation, but one meaning stands out above the rest. When Israel was in the wilderness and suffered want, they failed. When the True Israel (Jesus) was tested in the Judean wilderness, he passed the test. His testing not only proved (a) He was the New Israel, but (b) He was truly divine.

The critical issue: *Could Christ sin?* If He could not sin, could the temptation be real? If He could sin, could He be truly God?

- Christ could not sin because He did not have a sin nature.
- Christ could not sin because He was governed not by needs, wants, or weakness. The Spirit of God governed Him.
- Christ could not sin because of His righteous nature.
- Christ could be tempted because he was a man, but he could not sin because He was God.

**Fourth, the victory over Satan is evidence there is a righteousness from God available to all who believe**—a righteousness that qualifies the child of God for entrance into the kingdom of God. Our Lord was tested in the three areas we all face in life: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15). He knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21); He had no sin (1 John 3:5); and He did no sin (1 Peter 2:22).

Thus, we have the confidence His righteousness prevailed on this earth; and, we have the assurance there is a "*righteousness of God*" in the Gospel of Christ "*without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faithfulness of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference*" (Romans 3:21-22).

Fifth, without a doubt, we have confidence the temptation of Christ and His conquest over Satan is not only a cause of worship, but a model to all who are tempted. Satan, the one "*who conquered in Adam*," reacts to Jesus' resistance by walking away in shame, "*that we might have him under our feet*" (Cyril). "*For God grants not His aid to those who tempt Him, but to those who believe in Him: nor ought we, because He deigns us mercy, therefore to make a vain display.*" (Commentary on Luke, Sermon XII) Faith should win out over pride, with the reassurance that God will help us (Wittman, Posted 2010).

## **35. THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S MIRACLES**

The miracles of Christ are **not** mythological developments of the second and third century, but real, historical events occurring by the hand of Christ. But, what do they mean?



Two men came to a beautiful valley. One said, "*This valley is so beautiful, it must be attended by a gardener.*" The second agreed. They waited days and weeks but no gardener came. They put up ropes with bells to see if they could detect an invisible gardener coming into the valley to attend the plant life. But still, no gardener came. Finally, the second man said to the first, "What is the difference between our invisible gardener and no gardener at all?" His reasoning was correct. With no proof, how could they believe in an invisible gardener?

The good news of the Gospel is that the invisible gardener has entered the garden in the person of Christ so that men could see, feel, and touch the Creator. Jesus entered the garden and demonstrated the powers of the Creator in and through His miracles. His miracles are proof of claim that He was Who He claimed to be.

**First, Christ's miracles demonstrate His divinity:** "the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me . . . believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him" (John 10:25, 38). One has to ask, "If God were to become a man, how would you recognize Him?" By the Big "G" on His college sweatshirt? By His massive, bulging muscles? By a stage production that rivals Hollywood extravaganzas? His miracles demonstrated Christ had divine power.

- In the physical realm: He healed all diseases including raising dead bodies back to life.
- In the spiritual realm: He cast out demons.
- In the moral realm: He forgave sins.
- In the natural realm: He calmed seas and storms.

These are the acts of God, and God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Men could disbelieve Christ's claims, but how could they deny His works which were open to public inspection?

**Second, his miracles demonstrated the kingdom of God arrived in history in and through Christ.** Jesus asserted, "*if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you,*" (Matthew 12:28). The dynamic, eschatological kingdom promised by the prophets was being "fulfilled." The kingdom is the redemptive reign of God that entered the world in and through the ministry of Christ to defeat man's adversaries: Satan, sin, and death. His miracles demonstrated His power and authority over all the enemies of man.

**Third, His miracles are His credentials,** His badge of authority, and His identification plate. He was the Son of God on earth with authority and power. Any lunatic can claim that he is god or that he is the messiah, but what is the proof? We are not interested in tricksters! We demand proof of claim. When Christ acquitted the paralytic of his sins — sins that caused his palsy, the lawyers in Israel raised a legitimate objection: "*Who can forgive sins, but God alone?*" Jesus, perceiving their legitimate objection, turned towards the paralytic and said, "*Rise up and walk*" (Luke 5:21-23). The fact that the man walked proved Jesus' claim Only God can forgive sins, and that God was among them in Christ credentialing the Savior.

While God still does miracles, He is not credentialing any preachers today -- regardless of common assertions.

There were **three periods of miracles in the Bible**: the time of Moses; the time of Elijah, and the time of Christ. All three periods lasted about forty years. All three periods credentialed God's man which gave courage to the people of God to follow His appointed leader.

Would you have followed Moses out of Egypt and risked being charged with treason against Pharaoh if Moses had not performed his miracles in Egypt? Would you have turned our backs on the Baal kings of Israel (Ahab's family) and risked being charged with treason against the state if Elijah did not have the credentials of God's prophet? Miracles credentialed the man.

Now that the Son completed His ministry and proved his Sonship by rising from the dead, **the need for credentialing miracles among us has ceased**. As the word of God was completed, the apostolic era came to a close. By the time the last apostle died, the New Testament was complete. God's revelation was perfect. No longer was there a purpose for miracles. Credentialing miracles ceased as the apostle predicted (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). The Son of God has come. He is the ultimate revelation of God. Believe his credentials.

## 36. THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S TEACHING

In a nocturnal visit, Nicodemus said, "*We know that thou art a teacher come from God*" (John 3:2). A soldier said, "*Never man spoke like this man*" (John 7:46).

Sir Edward Arnold, one of the greatest authorities on Buddhism, declared that, "*one sentence from the Sermon on the Mount was worth more than everything Buddha had ever taught*" (Sanders, 1971, p. 113). His teaching set fires ablaze in the hearts of men and forests have been cut down to preserve glowing words flowing from pens kindled by the love of God.

- His teaching included many things about Himself, but he **lacked all** the braggadocio and arrogance other men. When He said, "*I am*," He was **not** being egocentric, or self-centered, or self-righteous. Christ was stating a truth that He was indivisibly united with YHWH.
- His teaching covered the great questions men of every age and in every culture have asked—questions about life, death, and the purpose of life. The kingdom of God, for example, is mentioned over 78 times in His ministry. Christ spoke of the Father, of eternal life, of the Holy Spirit, and of resurrection.
- His teaching was **not** something "new" but something consistent with the Ten Commandments; His insights exalted the Torah, fulfilled God's Law-word, yet refreshed and cleansed the hearts of men. To pit the Torah against Jesus's teaching is to misinterpret this Savior Rabbi. The opposite of law is not grace but lawlessness. His life and death fulfilled the law.
- His teaching came with His own authority, "*Verily, verily I say unto you*."
- His teachings answered the great questions about spiritual values, character, and ethics. It appealed to man's the highest sense of right and wrong: it represents the highest reflection of the character of God, and is, therefore, worth a lifetime of meditation.

- His teaching was simple, illustrative, and uncomplicated.
- His teachings appeals to men of all cultures and backgrounds and ethnicity. Unlike Islam which is stuck in the 6th century, the teachings of Christ transcend the ages, and has global, universal appeal.
- His teaching penetrated the calluses within human nature. Giant intellects, children, and hardened criminals have been transformed by Jesus' teaching.
- His teaching produces hope, inspires courage, and fuels faith.
- His teaching was original and unlike any tradition developed by other rabbis. In fact, he spoke with authority unlike the scribes and Pharisees.
- His teaching was backed by a powerful life of healing, holiness, and love recording over thirty-nine parables. When Jesus spoke, crowds listened. At one time Jesus got into a boat, and taught the crowds on the shore from the boat (Mark 4:1). On another occasion Jesus decided to remove his disciples away from the crowds. They went away in a boat, but the people saw him. There was constant reconnaissance going on about Jesus and where the disciples were going. The crowds rushed by foot and boat to meet Christ when He arrived at his destination. When Jesus left the boat He saw the crowds. In his compassion, Jesus saw the crowds as sheep without a shepherd and taught the people many things (Mark 6:34). On another occasion, Jesus was on a mountain when He taught the people. Everyone thought that He taught very well. He spoke with authority. Later, officials ordered soldiers to arrest Jesus. The soldiers returned without him. They said, 'No man ever spoke like this man' (John 7:46).

*Socrates taught for 40 years, Plato for 50, Aristotle for 40, and Jesus for only 3. Yet the influence of Christ's 3-year ministry infinitely transcends the impact left by the combined 130 years of teaching from these men who were among the greatest philosophers of all antiquity.*  
—Unknown

*Buddha never claimed to be God. Moses never claimed to be Jehovah. Mohammed never claimed to be Allah. Yet Jesus Christ claimed to be the true and living God. Buddha simply said, "I am a teacher in search of the truth." Jesus said, "I am the Truth." Confucius said, "I never claimed to be holy." Jesus said, "Who convicts me of sin?" Mohammed said, "Unless God throws his cloak of mercy over me, I have no hope." Jesus said, "Unless you believe in me, you will die in your sins." —Unknown*

*Fundamentally, our Lord's message was Himself. He did not come merely to preach a Gospel; He himself is that Gospel. He did not come merely to give bread; He said, "I am the bread." He did not come merely to shed light; He said, "I am the light." He did not come merely to show the door; He said, "I am the door." He did not come merely to name a shepherd; He said, "I am the shepherd." He did not come merely to point the way; He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." -- J. Sidlow Baxter*

*A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call*

*Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. -- C.S. Lewis*

## **37. THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S TRANSFIGURATION**

When we look at the Transfiguration we are treading on holy ground (Matthew 17:1ff). Located somewhere near Mt. Hermon in the northern thumb of Israel, there were three disciples, three heavenly personages, three settings (up the mountain, on the mountain, and down the mountain), three tabernacles, three sets of revelation, and five commands.

The location was near Mt. Hermon and near Caesarea Philippi<sup>24</sup>. The time was late at night.

The Transfiguration, counted by the Church as one of the "Twelve Great Feasts," had an important place in the Church calendar by the fourth century, as the homilies and sermons of such great Fathers as Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Ephraim the Syrian, and Saint Cyril of Alexandria attest; its origins go back to the first Christian centuries. In the fourth century also, Saint Helena erected a church on Mount Tabor, the traditional site of the Transfiguration, dedicated to the Feast. Although the event celebrated in the Feast occurred in the month of February, forty days before the Crucifixion, the dogmatic Feast was early transferred to August because its full glory and joy could not be fittingly celebrated amid the sorrow and repentance of Great Lent. The sixth day of August was chosen as being forty days before the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14th, old style), when Christ's Passion is again remembered (Russian Orthodox Church).

**First, the transfiguration confirmed His Divine Sonship** during a time when the elite of Israel mounted a campaign against Christ. Because of its pagan-religious history, Philippi became a symbol of idolatry. It was not without significance that Jesus was transfigured near this place. There, the identity of Christ as Son was confirmed. There the disciples saw the glory of the Son.

The word "*transfigured*" is the Greek word "*metamorph.*," It means "to transform," literally or figuratively to metamorphose, or to change. The word is a verb that means to change into another form. It is used in Romans 12:2 and means "to change the outside to match the inside" by means of renewing the mind.

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<sup>24</sup> Caesarea Philippi (originally Panias) was located two miles east of the site of Dan, twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee and forty miles southwest of the ancient city of Damascus. The site is 1,150 feet above sea level and ten miles south of the 9,200-foot Mount Hermon. Pagan worship was often conducted near running water, a probable reason why Panias, originally a worship center, was located in the vicinity of the three streams flowing from Mount Hermon. The first name associated with the site was "Panias," derived from worship of the god Pan there during the period of Greek control following the conquest by Alexander the Great. (The current name "Banias" is an Arab form of Panias.) Worship of the god Pan was centered at the cave and the spring at the high rock bluff. Several niches carved into the rock are identified as being dedicated "to Pan and the nymphs." Further reinforcing the site's attraction for worship, Herod the Great built a temple there dedicated to Emperor Augustus, who had given him the town.

The prefix "*meta*" means "to change." The root "*morphe*" means "form." In the case of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ, *metamorpho* means restoration of glory; that is, what was true inside Jesus was now manifest on the outside for the disciples to see. Jesus' divine nature was "*veiled*" (Hebrews 10:20) in human form and the transfiguration exposed the glory of Christ. The transfiguration of Jesus Christ displayed the Shekinah glory of God incarnate in the Son. The voice of God attesting to the truth of Jesus' Sonship was the second time God's voice was heard. The first time was at Jesus' baptism into His public ministry by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:7; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). They would hear the Father's voice one more time (John 12:28).

This truth is emphasized for us in a passage in the Apostle Paul's letter to Philippi. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form (*morphe*) of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. . ."

**Second, the transfiguration confirmed the Father's delight in the Son:** "*This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased . . . !*" The transfiguration was legal confirmation that all that Jesus was teaching them was true. The transfiguration of Jesus Christ was a visible sign in the presence of reliable witnesses of the reality of the power of God and the glory, which is Christ Jesus. They received a word of assurance from the Father Himself and a word of warning: "This is my beloved Son" Their response was not one of "joy," but of extreme fear. They heard the voice of God and lived.

**Third, the transfiguration left the disciples with a duty:** "*Listen to Him.*" They had been listening to Christ, but now every word seemed volcanic with significance.

**Fourth, the transfiguration is important because it shows Jesus superiority over the law and over the prophets.** Moses and Elijah were present. They represent the greatness of Torah and the hope of prophets. Jesus was the source of the law and the object of prophecy. The disciples were not told to listen to Moses or Elijah, but to reflect on the Jesus -- the Living Torah and the Expectation of the Prophets. At this time, the disciples understood that Christ was not Himself Elijah or another of the prophets, as some thought, but someone much greater: He Who could call upon the Law and the Prophets to be His witnesses, since He was the fulfillment of both.

**Fifth, the transfiguration is about kingdom fulfillment.** On this mountain, the disciples tasted a portion of the character and grandeur of the full manifestation of the kingdom of God which we believe will appear at our Lord's Second Advent, at the end of this age, and the beginning of the age to come (Matthew 16:28).

**Sixth, the transfiguration is important to us because of the admonishment given.** The voice sent a silver bullet: "*Listen to Him!*" Modern men listen to radio, to T.V., to friends, to professors, and to politicians, but very few listen to Christ. Everyone should listen to Christ for the following reasons:

**Jesus is the Master of Surprise.** It was on this mountain that the disciples experienced the surprise of their life. Following Christ is far from mundane and boring. The transfiguration was the greatest experience of their lives. Many surprises are in store for the man who listens to the Son.

- **Jesus is the glorified Man.** We are shown a preview of what Christ would receive once he ascended into heaven after His resurrection. The glory that Christ possessed before He came to earth was restored. This was a holy, brilliant, mesmerizing fireworks display the likes of which the disciples had

never dreamed. They were so impressed they wanted to build three temples. The person who represents us is none other than glorified humanity—the god-man.

- **Jesus is the living Torah**, the Source of the law, the great and only Lawgiver, the fulfillment of the law, the perfect subjective reflection of the character of God, the one and only Savior! There are not three saviors: Moses, Jesus, and Elijah. Nor are there three ways to God! There is only one way and that way is the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6). There are not three great religions in the world: Christianity, Judaism, and Christianity. There is only one true religion and that is the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. The other two belong to the cults of chaos.
- **Jesus is the fulfillment of the Prophets**: Elijah was the representative of the Prophets. But, Christ is the spirit of prophecy, the object of prophecy, the fulfillment of prophecy. Every hope in the prophets is in Christ. Jesus is the beloved Son. Jesus is all there is to say, to know, and to declare about God. To see Christ is to see the Father. He deserves not just a prominent place, or an important place, or privileged place, but the PRE-EMINENT PLACE in men's lives (Colossians 1:18).

*Luke 24:44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalm, concerning me.*

- **Jesus is the comforting Shepherd**. The three disciples were scared spit less, but His touch of love put them at rest.
- **Jesus is the coming King**. The transfiguration prefigures the glory that will accompany Christ when he returns to consummate the kingdom. Men are not to look to the State as the source of salvation, but to Christ, the hope of the ages.

## 38. THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S DEATH

### INTRODUCTION

What is the meaning of the death of Napoleon, Shakespeare, or Beethoven? Outside of family and close friends, their death meant nothing to the common man and had no effect on them. Within the next few hours, thousands of people will die and pass into eternity. Unless personally acquainted with one of the deceased, their passing will have no effect on us. But the death of Christ is totally different. His death is laden with meaning, and His death stands to affect all who trust Him.

The Gospels are historical records that describe the major events of Christ's life and death. Each gospel gives a detailed description of the death of Christ. Fifteen percent (15%) of Matthew's writing depicts the last week of Christ's life and ministry. Thirty percent (30%) of Mark records the final week of Christ's life. Fifty percent (50%) of Luke's record is about the final 6 months of Christ's sojourn on earth. And, about half of John's gospel informs us about Christ's final hours on this earth including His post resurrection experiences. Yet none of these factual accounts explain to us WHY CHRIST DIED!

In order to understand the meaning of His death, the student must go to one of the epistles, especially the Book of Romans to understand the significance of our Lord's death. The Gospels record the historic account of Christ's death; the epistles interpret His death theologically. The Gospels tell where He lived and what He did; the epistles tell why.

Know that Christ did **not** die because of natural causes, because of old age, or because He was a victim of man's cruelty to man. He did **not** die a martyr for a good cause, **nor** did He die as example to mankind. The following words describe the meaning of Christ's death:

The death of Christ must be put in a legal context. His death was forensic: that is, it has legal effect. Without legal force, judicial action is null and void. But, because Jesus' sacrifice meets the demands of law, it has legal implications.

### **REDEMPTION**

***Romans 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:***

***1 Timothy 2:6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.***

**Christ's death is redemptive**, that is, his death was a ransom for the souls of men. In Hellenistic Greek, the word *apolutrosis* (th/j avpolutrw,sewj) refers to the "buying back of a slave," to the "sacral manumission (release) of slaves," and it implies a "release" from bondage. Redemption involves (a) a price: his blood (Colossians 1:13, 14), and (b) a resulting state: release from the penalty of sins (Colossians 2:13-14). A debt was demanded, the price was paid, and that payment was in the Son who "gave Himself to redeem us from all iniquity" (Titus 2:14).

The emphasis here in the use of *apolutrosis* is upon "the release," the freeing of a convicted felon, the deliverance accomplished at the cross. Since sin is a debt (Matthew 6:12), the ransom for our release was the blood of Christ. Those who believe are released from the penalty of their sins. The result of redemption is the forgiveness of sins. Thus, the death of Christ is redemptive in meaning.

### **PROPITIATION**

***Romans 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;***

The word *propitiation* comes from the Greek word *hilasterion* (i`lasth,rionvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvv). The word *hilasterion* comes from the Hebrew word *mercy seat* (*kapporeth*), the place of atonement. The word *propitiation* means "to propitiate, to appease, to satisfy"; that is, Christ's death satisfied the claims of a divine justice. The Greek noun *ho Theos* points to the fact that God is the Initiator of propitiation. God sent His Son to balance the scales of justice.

Historically, a controversy arose over the use of the word *hilasterion*. Some scholars (C. H. Dodd; R. Schuller) could not picture an angry God who needed to be propitiated. They preferred to interpret *hilasterion* as "purify" or "cancel." However, in the context of Romans, we must remember that His wrath "is being revealed and will be revealed" (Romans 1:17; 2:5, 8). Sin offends God, and it makes him angry that men rebel and turn to wickedness. He has stored up wrath for a day of wrath. In love, however, Jesus became the "mercy seat" and endured God's wrath at Calvary so that repentant men might never have to face the day of wrath. His death was not only substitutionary, but propitiatory; i.e. the death of

Christ satisfied the claims of God's justice (Reymond, 1998). It was God who was propitiated, not the Devil, not man.

The word *hilasterion* is the word *mercy seat* in Hebrews 9:5. This rich picture portrays a truth that Christ is the One who satisfies the claims of divine justice (represented by cherubim staring down at the 10 commandments in the ark; that His shed blood satisfies all the demands of law; that the cross was the mercy seat and the basis of showing mercy to repentant men.

In John 19:12, we see an illusion to the mercy seat when Mary saw the two angels at Jesus' tomb. One sat at the foot and the other at the head. They were standing in the tomb while looking at the place where the body of Jesus once rested as if to say, "This is your mercy seat." This scene is an irresistible illustration of true propitiation.

God *did not* punish an innocent third party. The Lawgiver Himself bore the penalty of sin and exhausted His wrath. God provided His own propitiation through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19). When this truth is understood, Christian service is no longer dutifully rendered to appease and angry God, but gratefully rendered as an act of thankfulness to a gracious God.

### **SUBSTITUTION**

***Romans 5:6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.***

***1 Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;***

The death of Christ is *vicarious* meaning that He did **not** die for his own sake, but that his death was for the benefit of others. "*Christ died for our sins . . .*" The word "*for*" (*u`pe.r, huper*) is a significant word in that it tells us why Christ died. The word *for* means "above" or "in place of;" that is, Christ died "in place of the" sinner as his substitute. Christ is the sinner's substitute "Lamb" who died in the sinner's stead.

*Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under (*u`po, hupo*) the curse .*

*. . .*

*Galatians 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (*u`pe.r*): for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:*

The use of prepositions is interesting in Galatians 3:10. The sinner is said to be *under* a curse, but Christ stood *over him* (*huper*) in order to shield him from the curse. He became a curse *above* the sinner or in place of the sinner.

Representation means that Christ acts in our name and on our behalf. It is a legal concept. What Christ did on the cross, he did *for us*. "He gave his life a ransom *for* (*avnti., anti*) many" (Mark 10:45). The word "*for*" in this text is *anti* which means *at the end*. He came to serve, and in the end He gave His life a ransom for many sinners. Christ was given as an *antilutron* (a ransom) as a substitute for all men (1 Timothy 2:5). In 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4 Christ died *for* (*huper*) us -- an implied substitution. The meaning of the death of Christ is that it was substitutionary. We have a replacement of the party of record with another party who assumes liability for the first party. Jesus co-signs for our debt—a legal transaction.

### **IMPUTATION**



***Romans 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted (imputed) for righteousness.***

Another meaning connected to the death of Christ is explained by the term *imputation*. The words *impute*, *reckon*, and *account* come from the Greek word *logizoma* (logi,zomai, *logizomai*) -- a word used eleven times in Romans four. Our sins were imputed to Christ (Romans 5:19-21). But, it is also true that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer.

Imputed righteousness does not mean a *change of character*. It means ***a change of legal standing***. The imputation of sin to Christ did not change his character, but it did change his legal standing in the court. The imputation of Christ's righteousness to us does not change our character, but it does change our standing in God's court. The work of *Christ* changes our *legal standing*; the work of the *Holy Spirit* changes our *character*. The work of Christ is necessary and efficient; the work of the Spirit is esthetic but incomplete in this life.

What is imputed to the believer? What is needed by the sinner to stand right in God's courtroom is not faith, but ***works in conformity to law***. When a believer trusts Christ, he receives Christ's righteousness -- His obedience to law for us. It is His righteousness that is imputed to the believer. Faith is the *means*, not the *basis* of justification.

***Imputation is not infusion***. Just as sin was **not** infused into the character of Christ, righteousness is **not** fused into our heart. Just as our sin was *credited* to Christ's account, His righteousness is *credited* to the believer's account.

## **JUSTICE**

***Romans 3:26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just (justice), and the justifier of him (grace) which believeth in Jesus (or because of the faithfulness of Christ).***

Justice is another meaning of the death of Christ. God is unable to forgive mankind based on man's prayers. His justice **must** be satisfied. He said, "The soul that sins shall die;" that is, because God is just, He keeps His judicial promise to punish sinners. In the death of Christ, God's justice was satisfied. In the life of Christ, He obeyed the law on our behalf.

"*believeth in Jesus*" should be translated God justifies the man "***because of the faithfulness of Christ.***" The cross means that the Court was able to remain true to the law. The law was not compromised. God punished sin. Sin was penalized, howbeit, through the sacrifice and death of Another. Grace could **not** and does **not** nullify justice. In the death of the Savior, God's justice was exonerated and preserved.

## **LOVE AND GRACE**

***Romans 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:***

***Romans 5:8 But God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.***

The death of Christ was an act of love, a gracious gift of God that resulted in a Savior shielding us from God's own judicial wrath. The meaning of the death of Christ is grace. Grace shows us the motivation of salvation. God the Father was under no obligation to deliver man from His judgment.. His Son was a gift.

God's justice would have been fully exonerated if sinners were charged, judged, and sentenced to hell. But, in providing a substitute, God's grace was marvelously displayed; that is, "set in lights" so to speak so men could gaze at the glory of His grace.

Grace is **not** his work *in us*. It is his work outside of us -- something God did at Calvary through Christ. At the cross, justice and grace were marvelously displayed. While we associate the cross with anger, pain, suffering, and death, we must see that God's love was being fully displayed in the sacrifice of Christ.

## **JUSTIFICATION**

***Romans 3:26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.***

***Romans 4:25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.***

**First, the Justification of Christ:** When Christ died, He did **not** die because He was weak or because he was personally guilty of a crime. Our Lord was righteous. But how could this be proved?

Sin was *reckoned, credited* to Him; that is, sin was imputed to Him. His *standing* changed, but his character did **not**. To prove that our Lord was personal innocence, the Spirit justified Christ when He raised Jesus from the dead (1 Timothy 3:15, 16). His resurrection demonstrated Christ was innocent and righteous; that in dying, he was **not** dying for His own sin, but for the sins of others. The Savior was acting in behalf of men as God's lamb to pay for the debt demanded. His resurrection proved he was personally innocent. *The death and resurrection of Christ must first be interpreted as His personal justification.*

**Q:** Does the "which believeth in Jesus" refer to our faith in Jesus or to the faithful of Christ?

3:26 - "*which believeth in Jesus.*" The preposition "*which*" (*ek*) does **not** mean "when." "*ek*" means "coming from" or "because of." And, it is not referring to faith coming from us, but the faithfulness coming out of Christ due to His obedience to law. That is, we are dealing with a genitive of agency – the Agent being Christ and not the believer.

In relation to Romans 3:26, the NET Bible correctly translates the text,

*"This was also to demonstrate his righteousness in the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who lives because of Jesus' faithfulness."*

*"The conclusion to this passage is verse 26. And here Paul declares either that God "is just and the justifier of the one who lives because of Jesus' faithfulness" or God "is just even while justifying the one who lives because of Jesus' faithfulness." I am becoming increasingly convinced that the second alternative is probably what Paul meant. (Bible.org).*

Doctrinally, Paul rescued the gospel from the Judaizers who insisted man must do something to be saved.

Likewise, Paul rescues the gospel from the modern Arminian mind that asserts Christ + Christian's obedience of the Law (man's faith). Paul's gospel justified God's righteousness insisting that men are saved graciously not only *by* the death of Christ, but by the obedient life of Christ. God can be just and the justifier because Christ obeyed the law on our behalf; and, died for our sins; that is, in justifying men, God did **not** compromise His justice.

*Barnes: "It refers to the fact that God had retained the integrity as a moral governor; that he had shown a due regard to his Law, and to the penalty of the Law by his plan of salvation."*

Man is **not** the cause of justification. ***The faithfulness of Christ is the cause of justification.*** Yes, men must have faith, but "faith" without His faithfulness means nothing. However, these translation issues are fighting terms in Evangelical circles where the tradition of translation is always in favor of "our faith." That Christ was faithful is true; that men are called to believe is also true; that man can be saved "by faith" without His faithful work is **not** true.

See Romans 1:7 the Roman Christians were called "beloved of God." A genitive of agency referring to love coming out of God for the believers. It does not mean that God is responding lovingly towards that that act lovingly toward Him.

See 1 John 5:1 properly translated, "Everyone who believes . . . has been begotten by God (*ek tou Theo*)."

See Luke 1:45 and mark the participle, accusative and the ablative of agency framed like Romans 3:26 – "Things being told to her by the Lord" - **lelalhme,noij auvth/| para. kuri,ouÅ**

See Bible Hub:

Matthew 1:5 Prep

GRK: τὸν Βοὲς ἐκ τῆς Παχάβ

KJV: begat Booz of Rachab; and

INT: Boaz of Rahab

Matthew 1:5 Prep

GRK: τὸν Ἰωβηὶδ ἐκ τῆς Ρούθ

KJV: begat Obed of Ruth; and

INT: Obed of Ruth

**Second, the Justification of God** (Romans 3:25): The death of Christ proclaimed the righteousness of God; that is, it announced the satisfaction, completion, and execution of God's justice. Though God postponed the punishment of sin in past dispensations, sin was finally punished and justice was finally executed in our Lord's death.

Christ's death justifies God's gracious plan of redemption in Christ. The Bible says, "The soul that sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:3).

If God forgave sinners without punishing sin, then God's Word would be null and void. If God did not keep His promise to punish sinners (Ezekiel 18:4), then He would be a liar and His Word would be incredible. However, since Christ died *for* sinners as their substitute, and Christ was punished for sins in the sinner's stead, then God has kept his word. The claims of Divine justice were satisfied at the cross. Blood was shed. Blood currency paid! Justice complete, thus, the just Judge became the gracious Justifier.

God not only saves people, *He saves them justly*. The cross is about a justice God satisfying his own justice in order to save sinners.

**Third, the Justification of the Believer:** A true substitution implies that Christ not only took the sinner's sin, but that the believing sinner receives His righteousness. While Christ was declared "guilty," the believing sinner is declared "righteous." This dual imputation is called the believer's justification (Romans 3:24). Justification is the pith and marrow of the cross.

### **BLOOD, THE CURRENCY OF THE SPIRIT WORLD**

*Hebrews 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with **blood**; and without shedding of **blood** is no remission.*

Consider this marvelous truth, "Blood is the currency of the spirit-world."

Modern man with his love of money and psychological gimmicks falls short of achieving his spiritual ambitions because he fails to grasp that blood is the only lawful currency accepted between spirits and mortals. Even in the French Quarter of New Orleans where Voodoo Queens practice love spells and curses, necromancers understand that to summons the gods of the underworld, blood must be mixed with frog hairs and toenails to attract the spirits. Even ancient Egyptians understood that mediation between the goat-gods and man required blood—lots of blood. Drinking blood, washing in blood, and sprinkling blood on symbolic objects guaranteed the Grand Zombi access to demonic powers.

But, Americans may not be very bright. The only legal tender Americans seem to understand are worthless FRNs and Citibank Credit Cards. "Money" is an American religion. After all, every dollar boast it is backed by "the full **faith** and credit" of the U.S. government -- a bankrupt corporation at that! To Americans, FRNs can buy anything, even favors with God. In love with gold-platinum credit cards, BMWs, and dollar bills, the average U.S. citizen hopes to gain power by spending himself into debt -- by devoting himself to yoga exercises, and by using psychedelic drugs to engage the spirit world. Even in the Christian community, people pray the rosary, offer money in exchange for spiritual favors, and practice oil anointing in hopes of contracting for power in the spirit world. But, why would a spirit be interested in gold or silver or those worthless green FRNs with pictures of dead presidents?

When will Americans wake up and realize *that blood is the currency of the spirit world*; that only by blood can men escape the penalties of their naked arrogance, shameful lusts, and outbursts of anger?

This raises the question: How can a transgressor appease the offended Spirit he has neglected all his life? How can a proud miscreant who has plunged into sensuality, fornication, and abominable idolatries be reconciled with his Creator?

*The answer* is in the blood. Blood has to be brought to the bargaining table. Blood is the only currency recognized in the spirit world. Blood is the only consideration accepted for a contract. Religion won't do. Feeling sorry for your wicked deeds can't buy spit. Saying "I'm sorry" to an offended Spirit will get you thrown into hell. The **only** tender accepted for ransom is blood . . . and a very special kind of blood -- innocent blood, pure blood, and sinless blood! Is there such a rare treasure as this? Yes, there is!

In His grace and mercy, the great Spirit offered the blood of His Son as currency for redemption:

*"knowing that you were ransomed from the corruptible ways inherited from your forefathers, not with worthless things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or defect"- 1 Peter 1:19.*

Therefore, if you are trusting in your miserable money or worthless religious rituals or feeble beliefs that you aren't that bad of a person, flee to the cross and lay hold of the horns on the altar. Plead the blood of Christ might be applied to your sins. It is the only currency accepted in the spirit world.

### **THINGS PURCHASED BY BLOOD**

As stated in the previous section, ***blood is the currency of the spirit world***. In the OT blood redeemed altars, tablets, a nation, the tabernacle and its furnishings, temple utensils, priests and their garments including their ears, hands, and feet. Hebrews tells us that almost everything was cleansed / purchased by blood. Notice the treasures purchased by blood in the New Testament:

- Blood currency purchased propitiation- Romans 3:25
- Blood currency purchased justification- Romans 5:9
- Blood currency purchases participation in the body of Christ- 1 Corinthians 10:16
- Blood currency purchases "redemption," the forgiveness of sins- Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 1 John 1:7
- Blood currency purchases nearness / access / participation with and to Christ, to the commonwealth of Israel, to the benefits of covenants, to hope- Ephesians 2:12, 13.
- Blood currency secures peace between rebels and the great Spirit- Colossians 1:20.
- Blood currency secures "eternal redemption" for the elect- Hebrews 9:12.
- Blood currency purchases a clear conscience from dead works enabling it to serve God- Hebrews 9:14
- Blood currency secures and inaugurates contracts / covenants between God and men- Hebrews 9:18; 13:20
- Blood currency purchases sanctification and holiness- Hebrews 10:4, 10; 13:12

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- Blood currency purchases an entrance into heaven and the presence of Almighty God- Hebrews 10:19.
- Blood currency purchases the silence of accusers- Hebrews 12:24; Revelation 12:11.
- Blood currency is the ransom price demanded by the Judge- 1 Peter 1:19.
- Blood currency cleanses, washes, purifies, and separates sins from men- Revelation 1:5; 7:14
- No wonder the church triumphant bursts into praise and sings about the power of the blood- Revelation 5:9; and, for those who will not pay the price, the King will shed their blood (Revelation 19:13).

### **THE DEFEAT OF GOD'S ENEMIES**

*Colossians 2:15 And having **spoiled** principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, **triumphing** over them in it.*

*Hebrews 2:14-15 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might **destroy** him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And **deliver them** who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

The mission of Christ is defined in terms of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is described as a reign—the reign of Christ. God's rule is exercised in and through the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ to the right hand of God.

The purpose of this reign is the defeat of God's enemies— man's fundamental enemies such as Satan, sin, and death as well as political adversaries, authorities and powers. Thus, we must come to see the Christ event as the triumph over cosmic powers—both the visible world and invisible world. In Colossians 2:15, the death of Christ is said to have “spoiled” rulers and authorities; that is, “*disarmed*” the anti-god forces. The death of Christ was an initial, legal, military defeat over the enemies of man.

Satan, having exhausted his weaponry on Christ, was unable to prevent our Lord's conquest in and through his death, burial, and resurrection. Hebrews tells that he “*destroyed*” him that had the power of death.

The term “*destroy*” does **not** mean annihilation but to “unemploy,” or “render idyll.” Satan, sin, and death still exist, but the enemies of man no longer have a legal noose around the neck of believers. So powerful was this defeat had rulers of this age understood what was happening at the cross, “they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Corinthians 2:8).

So powerful was this defeat, the Scripture provides a picture for us.

*Colossians 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:*

The triumph of the kingdom can be found in the term “*translated*.”

In Hellenistic Greek, the term “*translated*” mean “transport.” It refers to a military invasion on an island wherein citizens are being held captive in a prison camp. The invasion is made; the battle fought; the adversaries defeated, and the prisoners freed. Consequently, the captain is able to take the prisoners on board ship and transport them back to their homeland. The kingdom of God invaded this planet; the battle was fought; the prisoners freed; and, the prisoners (us) have been transported to our homeland, the “kingdom of his dear Son.”

## 39. THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S BURIAL

*1 Corinthians 15:4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

It is good news that Christ died, and that he was buried (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Burials are usually sad and morbid affairs, the least liked of our duties one to another, but in Christ's case, His burial is gospel. A burial means that medical examiners have testified to a death. The corpse, the human shell, must be put away.

The burial of Christ is an historical statement that Jesus literally, physically died. The historical proof of His death is that he was buried. We don't bury live people. We only bury the deceased. The burial of Christ means that Christ was really dead, that he experienced a real death. He did **not** swoon or have an out of the body experience. *This means his resurrection was an authentic victory over death.* His resurrection is **not** a metaphor, but real coming to life after real death.

**Remember, religion of any kind is about man's fundamental problem.** Man's fundamental problem is that he is going to die! Man can advance any proposition he wants about death. But, is there any evidence that death can be overcome? Is there any evidence of an afterlife? The ultimate question is this: “Is there any visible, tangible, touchable, seeable, synthetic, historical proof that death can be defeated?”

To answer the above question, someone must really die and really come back to life.

The good news of the gospel is that Jesus really died and really came back to life. We know He was dead, because His contemporaries buried him! And, they were not strangers to the morbid end of all men.

In other words, to prove death can be overcome, Jesus was truly put to death and truly buried according to Jewish custom. It is, therefore, good news that Jesus was buried because a burial is evidence that Jesus truly died. If Jesus had not truly died, then there can be no true resurrection.

## 40. THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

Every historian asks, “What is the meaning of history?” And, every theologian must ask, “What is the meaning of Christ's resurrection?”

Religion is about man's fundamental problem.

***Man's fundamental problem is death.*** Whether you are a Hindu, Moslem, Atheist, Mormon, Druid, or Christian, you have a belief about what happens to your spirit when you die. Thus, every man has a religion whether it be true or false.

But, "Does belief determine reality?"

**Stephen Belynskyj**, a professor at Notre Dame, starts each confirmation class with an examination of a jar full of beans. The students are told to guess how many jelly beans are in the jar. Afterward, he reveals the true number of jelly beans. Next, he asks them to choose their favorite song. Belynskyj asks, "And which one of these songs is closest to being right?" The students always protest because there is no "right answer." A person's favorite song is purely a matter of taste. Belynskyj drives home his point, "When you decide what to believe in terms of your faith, is that more like guessing the number of beans, or more like choosing your favorite song?" Always, Belynskyj says, from old as well as young, he gets the same answer: Choosing one's faith is more like choosing a favorite song. (Belynskyj, 1992) *If you do not have empirical evidence, what makes you think your belief about an afterlife is correct?*

The willingness to believe in something without evidence is called "fideism." All religions but Christianity are stuck in the swamp of fideism and the pit of subjectivism. ONLY Christianity offers empirical proof of its proposition—legal proof, objective evidence that its claims are founded on fact:

**The Resurrection is . . .**

### **FORENSIC PROOF THAT DEATH WAS DEFEATED**

You the jury must deliberate the facts. **Only** Christianity offers legal proof that there is hope beyond the grave. If the resurrection means anything, it means that one man conquered death. After Jesus was crucified, over 500 people participated in the resurrection event. They saw him, touched him, and heard him speak. John could confidently say:

*1 John 1:1-3 That which was from the beginning, which we have **heard**, which we have **seen** with our eyes, which we have **looked upon**, and our hands have **handled**, of the Word of life; For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us; That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."*

The Apostle Peter said,

*"For we have **not** followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:16).*

The fact the resurrection event was observed by eyewitnesses provided legal proof that death was defeated.

When Jesus physically rose from the dead He offered to the world-courtroom forensic proof that He had solved man's fundamental problem—the domination of death in human history. Christians have hope that is **not** based on religious theory, but upon *empirical evidence* — eyewitness testimony that can stand the scrutiny of cross examination. This evidence is man's fundamental hope.



As Vice President, George Bush Sr. represented the U.S. at the funeral of former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, Bush was deeply moved by a silent protest carried out by Brezhnev's widow. She performed an act of great courage when she made the sign of the cross on her dead husband's chest. In the citadel of secular, atheistic power, the wife of the man who led the nation in atheistic communism hoped that her husband was wrong. She hoped that there was another life, and that that life was best represented by Jesus who died on the cross and rose again. Her symbol of cross was a symbolic gesture that that same Jesus might yet have mercy on her husband. (Thomas, 1994)

When Christians celebrate Easter Sunday, they do so knowing that their faith rests on a real, factual, historical event—the literal, tangible, physical resurrection of Christ from the grave. And, no other religious claim is grounded upon such evidentiary fact. Christianity is not a fairy tale, but a faith claim grounded upon historical events—events that are subject to inspection and examination.

### **FORENSIC PROOF OF CHRIST'S DIETY**

Anyone can claim to be God, but where is the proof?

When people make some kind of claim to divinity, we look at them as people who are a few tacos short of a combination plate. But with Christ, we see no evidence that he had fits of delusion. Before Christ died, He made the claim, “*I am the resurrection and the life*” (John 11:25). The resurrection is proof that Jesus Christ has life in Himself and that He is the living Word of God (John 1:1-3). Only God can defeat death. If Christ rose from the dead, then He is more than a man, more than a great prophet, more than a religious teacher; He is Lord and God (1 Timothy 3:15, 16).

*I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” (Lewis, 1952 Reprinted 2001)*

### **FORENSIC PROOF OF OUR JUSTIFICATION**

Paul said, “*Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*” (Romans 4:25).

How do we know that Christ was not dying for His own sins? How do we know that the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to those who believe?

The word “*justification*” is a legal term associated with law (Deuteronomy 25:1). It means, “*To be declared righteous and treated as such.*” Only righteous people can be declared righteous in the eyes of Heaven’s court.

If we are sinners, how can we ever stand righteous before a holy God?

**The answer lies in the truth of justification.** Perfect righteousness is a gift of God—a righteousness associated with Christ's life of obedience (Romans 5:16ff). The answer also rests in Christ's vicarious substitutionary sacrifice for us, i.e. *He exchanged His righteousness for our sins*.

The answer is completed in the resurrection which expressed God's acceptance of the dual exchange which took place at the cross. If the exchange had not been complete, Jesus would have remained in the tomb.

The exchange at the cross was a legal transaction between God and His Son. Christ received power of attorney to act on behalf of repentant sinners. In His act of substitution, our sins were conveyed to Him, and His righteousness was conveyed to us. However, if Christ were not perfectly innocent, He could not be a vicarious substitute. He would have to pay for His own sin, and there would be no "righteousness" to be conveyed to man.

The resurrection is forensic proof that Christ died, not for His own sin, but for our sin. The resurrection is proof that Christ's righteousness was conveyed to us via imputation (Romans 4:5). He accepted our liabilities, and we received His assets. Because He "*lived for us*" (assets), He could also die for our sins (the liabilities).

A small boy had been consistently late for dinner. Though his parents had warned him to be on time, he arrived later than ever one night. He found his parents already seated at the table, about to start eating. Quickly he sat at his place. He noticed what was set before him -- a slice of bread and a glass of water. There was silence as he disappointingly sat staring at his plate. Suddenly he saw his father's hand reach over, pick up his plate of bread and exchange it for the father's warm meal. The father smiled warmly. When the boy became a man, he said, "All my life I've known what God was like by what my father did that night." (*Homemade*, May, 1989).

### **FORENSIC PROOF OF THE ESCHATON**

The major message of Christ was the kingdom of God (Matthew 4:17). The kingdom of God is called "eternal life," "life," "heaven," or the "renewal of all things" (Matthew 19:16-29). Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come." The kingdom of God is the goal of history. History is marching toward the Eschaton, the final state of existence.

The Eschaton is an age when Paradise Lost will be Paradise Restored. Death reigns now, but where Christ rules, life reigns. The "age to come" is an age of resurrection; i.e. it is an age where eternal life dominates existence. But, how do we know that the kingdom of God is not just a dream—the meanderings of an idealistic mind? Is there any proof in history that such an age awaits the children of God?

Jesus rose from the dead. The resurrection is an eschatological event associated with the Eschaton. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead is forensic evidence that an age of resurrection does exist and will arrive in history at the end of this age (Luke 19:34-38).

### **FORENSIC PROOF OF A FUTURE RESURRECTION**

Shall we live again? The great hope of the Christian is that he will rise on the last day (John 11:24). When we lay a loved one in the grave, what proof do we have that death is not Lord of eternity? The evidence of this hope is found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If God raised Christ from the dead, He can raise us from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:12ff)!

**Benjamin Franklin** penned his own epitaph. His commitment to Christ remains ambiguous, but it seems he must have been influenced by Paul's teaching of the resurrection of the body. In one of his lighter moments, he wrote:

*The Body of B. Franklin, Printer, Like the Cover of an old Book Its contents torn out, And stript of its Lettering and Guilding, Lies here, Food for Worms, But the Work shall not be wholly lost: For it will, as he believ'd, Appear once more In a new & more perfect Edition, Corrected and amended by the Author.*

### **FORENSIC PROOF OF AN ESCHATOLOGICAL JUDGMENT**

More than four out of every five Americans agree that "*we all will be called before God at Judgment Day to answer for our sins,*" says a poll conducted for the Times Mirror Company (National and International Religion Report, 1993). But, where is the proof?

The Bible says, "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

The Judgment is an eschatological event, an event associated with the consummation of history, an event where the books are opened and the great and the small stand before God (Revelation 20:12). But, is there any proof that there will be a judgment of Biblical proportions?

Paul said, "Because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

We know that all men will appear before God's eschatological judgment because an eschatological resurrection took place in history. Since the Final Judgment is based on the premise of resurrection, Christ's resurrection provides confirmation that all men will face God's eschatological judgment.

**Harry Ironside** told the story of pioneers who were making their way across one of the central states to a distant place that had been opened up for homesteading. On the way a prairie fire rushed toward them. One old timer reacted quickly and commanded the wagoners to set fire to the grass in front of them. When the section was burned, they moved their wagons on to burn ground. As the flames roared on toward them from the west, a little girl cried out in terror, "*Are you sure we shall not all be burned up?*" The leader replied, "*My child, the flames cannot reach us here, for we are standing where the fire has been!*" Let us believe and rest for we are standing where the fire has been!"

We can find safety from the eschatological judgment if we will flee to where the fire of God's judgment has already burned—to Calvary.

In conclusion, the hope of eternal life is built on the evidence of an empty tomb.

According to an article in *Leadership Magazine*, little Philip, born with Down's syndrome, attended a third-grade Sunday school class with several eight-year-old boys and girls. Typical of that age, the children did not readily accept Philip with his differences. Due to a thoughtful teacher, the class eventually accepted Philip, though not fully. The Sunday after Easter the teacher brought L'eggs pantyhose containers, which looked like large eggs. Each child received one. The teacher told the children to go outside on that lovely spring day and find a symbol of new life and put it in the egg-like container. After running about the church property in wild confusion, the students returned to the classroom and

placed the containers on the table. Surrounded by the children, the teacher began to open them one by one. After each one, whether a flower, butterfly, or leaf, the class would ooh and aah.

However, she opened one that had nothing inside. The children exclaimed, "That's stupid. That's not fair. Somebody didn't do their assignment." Philip spoke up, "That's mine." "Philip, you don't ever do things right!" the students retorted. "There's nothing there!" "I did so do it," Philip insisted. "I did do it. It's empty. The tomb was empty!"

Silence followed. From then on Philip became a full member of the class.

Shortly thereafter, Philip died from an infection most normal children would have shrugged off. At the funeral this class of eight-year-olds marched up to the altar not with flowers, but with empty pantyhose eggs to place in Philip's coffin.

The tomb is empty. All other graves contain human remains. Do we choose your faith because it is like our favorite song, or did we choose our faith because it is backed by forensic evidence that death has been defeated in and through the resurrection of Christ?

## **41. THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION**

The older I become, the more interested I am in politics. Sometimes, I wish I had a representative in the White House that would listen to my concerns and act on them. Likewise, I share this same concern before the High Court of the Universe, don't you?

It is significant that the gospel account begins with the birth of Christ and ends with the ascension of Christ at the right hand of God. Without understanding the ascension and its significance, something will be missing in our confidence and service to Christ. A proper appreciation for Christ's present risen life (PRL) relieves our fears and roots our confidence in Sovereignty.

<sup>NAS</sup> ***Acts 1:9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.***

***The ascension took place in the daytime near Bethany on the east side of the Mount of Olives*** (Luke 24:50). Jesus gave his final address and then He was carried up into a cloud. The word "*taken up*" comes from "*epairo*" (evph,rqh) and in Hellenistic Greek means to "*hoist the sail*" (Acts 27:40). The ascension took place on or around May 14th, 34 A.D. (40 days after the crucifixion/resurrection, April 3, 33 A.D.) (Acts 1:3).

Some have argued that Christ ascended with his blood to the Father after his death. However, scholarship has demonstrated this is not so. The statement in John 20:17, "*I have not yet ascended*" is a comforting prediction. He told Mary that He would ascend at some unknown time in the future, but at the time He was speaking to her, he had not yet ascended.

***The ascension was a symbolic act.*** Jesus could have been taken to the Father in a number of honoring ways. The ascension at Bethany was a symbolic act made intelligible to the disciples that Christ was

going to His Father. It represented the acceptance of the man Jesus by the Father to the right hand of God (Acts 2:34-36). The reason for his ascension is not to present the blood on the Mercy Seat in Heaven. The cross was the *mercy seat* in full view of the Father.

***The ascension was designed to persuade.*** Jesus appeared to the disciples on numerous occasions over a forty day period. The forty days was designed to re-assure the disciples of the truth of His resurrection as well as wean the disciples from a dependence on his physical presence. The ascension was a message designed to convince the disciples that they need not expect Him again, and that they should no longer be kept in suspense in regards to another earthly post-resurrection appearance.

***The ascension marked the end of Jesus' earthly ministry.*** It was the final act, the drop of the curtain, the final note in the drama of the divine visitation. His unique personality demanded an exit appropriate for the regal Son. His unique entrance into life culminated in a grand exit. His humble work on the cross was finished. He ascended to be crowned with glorious honor as the Lord Christ. His disappearance was an eyewitness, historical event that could be intelligently explained to a wondering world.

***The ascension was His vindication that He came from God, and was going to God*** (John 8:42). Christ taught that His Father sent him on a mission to earth (John 5:30, 36). The ascension was proof that His mission was complete and that he had served honorably.

***The ascension was His exaltation to glory.*** In coming to earth, Christ humbled himself to become a man. His ascension was his staircase to glory, fame, honor, and eternal dominion. His pre-existent glory was restored, and therefore, He was adorned with indescribable glory (Philippians 2:5-12; Revelation 1). However, the ascension was more than a return to glory and display of deity. It was a theanthropic glorification. His ascension meant that Christ the man, the newly installed federal head of God's new creation, the last Adam, the saint's Representative was glorified in heaven guaranteeing the believer's ultimate glorification with Him (Romans 8:29, 30).

***The ascension was the beginning of a new ministry.*** Christ said it was *good* (*sumfe, rw, sumphero*) for Him to go away so the Holy Spirit could be given to men (John 16:7). The glorified Christ on the throne began a new work of cleansing and sanctifying His church (Ephesians 5:25ff). The agent of this work of beautification is the Holy Spirit.

***The ascension was His coronation as Messiah.*** He entered his ministry *Messiah designatus*, but after the ascension, He became the inaugurated crowned Prince. Having purchased men with his blood, He earned the right to be the Christ and Lord of God's new creation (1 Corinthians 5:17; 15:47). After the ascension, he would be addressed as:

- “the Lord Jesus Christ” (81x in the epistles)
- “Christ the Lord” (Acts 2:36)
- “Christ Jesus” (58 X)
- “Lord Jesus” (Acts 4:33, used 26x in the epistles)
- “Only Potentate” (1 Timothy 6:15)
- “King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 6:15)

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- “Great High Priest” (Hebrews 4:14)
- “Ruler of the Kings of the earth” (Revelation 1:5)
- “the Judge of His people” (Hebrews 10:30; 2 Timothy 4:8)
- “the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:10).
- “Head of the church” (Ephesians 1:19-22)

***His ascension marked the beginning of His Kingly Reign:*** Christ is presented as one sitting on the right hand of God (Mark 16:19). This is metaphorical language, which presents to us a Christ, not at rest, but One who is endowed with power and authority to bring history into submission to the Divine will. There is no sphere, no realm, no kingdom, and no household where Christ does not have jurisdiction. Consequently, all men are commanded to repent and obey Him (Acts 17:30).

- “All authority was given” to Him (Matthew 28:13).
- “Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion” (Ephesians 1:21).
- “Righteous and true are thy ways, Thou King of the Nations” (Revelation 15:3).
- “With angels, authorities, and powers in submission to Him . . .” (1 Peter 3:22).
- “He was given authority, glory and sovereign power” (Daniel 7:14).
- “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet” (1 Corinthians 15:24).

His Lordship not only extends to individual Christians, but to all men and their institutions. He is Lord of the individual, Lord of the family, Lord of the church, and He is Lord of the nations. The only question is, “*Will men acknowledge Him as such?*”

### **PRAYER FOR INSIGHT**

***Ephesians 1:15-23 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.***

***That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,***

***And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,***

***Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all***

***That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. . . that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.***

Having concluded his eulogy, Paul bows in prayer for the believers in Asia Minor-believers who bore the true marks that characterize all Christians: faith in Christ and love for the brethren. Paul's prayer is a model prayer. It is a good thing to pray the prayers of the Bible. They are insights into what Christians really need.

**Warren Wiersbe** tells the story of William Randolph Hearst, a famous art collector, who read the description of a famous painting and decided that he wanted to acquire the piece. He commissioned his staff to find out where the art work was located. After months of searching, his agent reported to Hearst that he found the famous masterpiece. It was located in a warehouse owned by Hearst. Like William Hearst we may not be enjoying the blessings we already possess. If we do not understand our present riches in Christ, we may engage in a quest for something we already have.

Because the Colossians were troubled by their spiritual poverty and did not understand their riches in Christ, they embarked on a spiritual journey into the ghettos of *first century metaphysics*. Many turned to the empty *house of Greek philosophy* for answers only to learn in their famine that, "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ" (Colossians 3:2). Some turned to *Jewish legalism* and its strict dietary laws and observance of new moons and Sabbath days only to learn in their prison that Christ was the fullness and splendor of illusive shadows they chased (Colossians 2:17). Others turned to the pain-inflicted world of *merkabah mysticism* where participants fasted, abased, and deprived themselves of food and water hoping to obtain a glimpse into the unseen world of spirits. Those participants had to learn that Christ is the essence of all spiritual truth and the source of spiritual wealth (Colossians 2:19).

Unaware of their riches in Christ, many Christians tire of Bible study to pursue spiritual mirages. Many are intrigued with pop psychology and its shallow planks of self-esteem, self-fulfillment, and self-actualization. Some let go of the spiritual altogether to pursue the material things of this world.

We don't have to go down rabbit trails in pursuit of spiritual wealth.

**If we understand and pray this prayer, we can gain insights into our riches in Christ.**

### **INSIGHT INTO THE PLAN OF GOD**

We do not need more spiritual blessings, more peace, a deeper life or even a higher life. We need the "*spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him*" (1:17).

The term "*spirit*" lacks the article. This is not the Holy Spirit, but an attitude or disposition that seeks wisdom and revelation. Revelation is the acquisition of knowledge. Wisdom is the practical application of knowledge. The word "*sophomore*" (wise fool) contains the Greek word "wisdom" (*sophia*). We do **not** need more revelation, but we **do need** insight into the Revelation of God in Christ. We are blessed with galaxies of riches in Christ but only acquire planets of the wealth in the universe of the gospel of Christ.

***The eyes of our heart need to be enlightened so we may know the hope of His calling.***

To the Greek, the word *heart* (*kardia*) did not refer to the seat of emotions, but to the door of the mind.

The term “eyes” does not refer to the eye of the body, but the eye of the soul. Paul is **not** praying that believers would feel hope, but *know* the hope of His calling; that they would **not** experience blessing from God, but that they would *be enlightened* about the blessings of God had already given them. The need is for *light*, **not** heat; for *reformation*, **not** revival.

Believers are like impoverished street people huddling together around a candle in the vast, dark vault of God's storehouse of treasures. Unable to see the wealth around them, they are riddled with fear.

Christians do **not** need more wealth, but they need a bright *light* to see the riches that are all around them in election (found in Ephesians 1:4), in *predestination* (1:5), in *adoption* as sons (1:5), in *redemption* (1:6), in *forgiveness* (1:6), in the *revelation* of the mystery of his will (1:9, 10), in His *inheritance* (1:11), in the gospel of salvation (1:13), in *the good faith deposit of the Spirit* (1:13, 14), in one's *identification* with the history of Christ (2:1-7), and into the *mystery* of the church (Ch.2-3).

### **INSIGHT INTO THE POWER OF GOD**

Paul prays Christians might be enlightened to know what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe (Ephesians 1:19).

“Dynamite” and “dynamo” are derived from the Greek word for *power* (duna,mewj).

Two Greek adjectives define the quality of this power. The word “great” (me,geqoj) means great in size. Words are created from this term: megaphone, megabyte, and megaton (the explosive force of a million tons of TNT). The word “surpassing” comes from the Greek word *uperballo* which means “to throw beyond.” It was used by Olympian champions who threw beyond other javelin throwers. God's megatons of power were exerted in raising Jesus from the grave.

Even with all the doctors and scientists and megatons of TNT available, none can raise the dead. In raising Christ to God's right hand in glory, God *out threw* man's abilities, expectations, and dreams.

**Three more words describe this power.** The Greek word (1) *energia* refers to the potential force of a thing. It is referring to all the capacities of divinity.

The word (2) *ischus* (ivscu,oj) describes the *source* of all power in God. When this potential force is released from the source of God's power, it produces (3) *kratos* (kra,touj) or work. It is translated “strength” or “might” in Mary's Magnificat when she attribute the miracle of her pregnancy to the strength of God.

Somehow, Paul wants us to know and understand the potential energy (*energia*) of God's megaton power (*dunamos*) coming from the source of His strength (*ischus*) that was released with great force (*kratos*) in history when He raised Christ from the dead.

This power is available for believers. It is near us, on us, in us, and around us.

Paul did not pray for power to do God's will, but that *we might know* we already possess the power extended to us in to do God's will. If we *know* His will and His power, we can *experience* His power if we walk by faith in His plan.

### **INSIGHT INTO THE POSITION OF CHRIST**



Paul prays that believers might know how great the risen Christ has become not only in His resurrection, His ascension, but also in His session at the right hand of the Father (Ephesians 1:19-22). The Lord Jesus Christ holds the greatest position in the universe. The phrase “*right hand*” refers to the ultimate position and honor within a kingdom. The term “*far above*” intensifies the authority of Christ. He is above ALL and has authority over ALL the following jurisdictions of power:

- **Principalities:** The Greek term “*principlity*” (*arche*) refers to the first cause, the first in a series, or the principal rulers of a nation.
- **Powers:** The Greek word “power” (*evxousi,aj*) refers to delegated authority within a kingdom, the extension and limitation of power.
- **Mights:** “Mights” is our word *dunamis* which refers to the power of a government. Governments have no rights, only power. People have rights; government has power.
- **Dominions:** The word dominion (*kurio,tthoj*) is derived from the term “lords.” It refers to the boundaries of a lord’s rule; i.e. the domain of his rule. It would include populations as well as territory. We call this “jurisdiction.” These dominions would include the boundaries/jurisdictions of nations on earth and include the spiritual realm where Satan rules.
- **Every name that is named:** No matter what power, king, government, or authority arises in history, Christ will always have a superior name, a superior accomplishment, superior authority, superior honor, and superior claim upon men. He is greater than Caesar, Charlemagne, Napoleon, and George Washington.

While kings and rulers on earth have great authority and power, they also have great limitations. Our Lord has greater authority, greater power, and has no limitations. His authority not only extends to this age, but to the age to come. He has jurisdiction over every nation and makes His claim over all men and all of their institutions.

The Bible names Him the **Head of the Church**. But, what does this mean?

**It refers to our Lord’s position.** He is the Master, Commander, Lord, Chief, CEO, Sovereign, and King of the church.

**It refers to our Lord’s dignity and authority as supreme Ruler of the New Israel.** As people, we spend a lot of time grooming our hair, brushing our teeth, and trimming our eyebrows for our own image. As Head of the church, He is preeminent. As Head, He is worthy of honor and esteem and worship. Our goal is to glorify our Head.

**It refers to the priesthood of all believers.** The church does not have a priesthood, it is a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5-12). While it is wonderful to have others pray for us, each of us has access to the Head of the Church.

**It means that our Lord sustains a living organism.** His body is not an organization, but an organism. His body is not an artificial person, but a living body made up a living people. As a living organism, the church is entitled to all rights as a spiritual being under His direction.

**It implies the dependent nature of the church.** The church originates with and is sustained by the Christ. It does not owe its existence to the state. The church should look to the Lord, not the state, to lead and to guide her business on earth.

**It invokes the exclusive authority of Christ and the independent nature of the church.** The church owes its existence to Christ, not to men; to Christ, not preachers; to Christ, not Congress!

While pastors are part of the plan of God, a pastor is **not** the head of the church. While the pastor may have certain responsibilities, we must remember the pastor is a fellow servant and pilgrim on this earth. While a church may be elder ruled, the elders are **not** the head of the church. While the elders are essential to serving the church, we should remember they are simply *trustees* in charge of God's work in a local congregation.

While a president may be the head of a country, he is **not** the head of the church. The king of England may be the head of an organization called "*the church*," a king or queen is **not** the head of the church. The church is sovereign by virtue of her relationship to Christ. It was for this reason the Pilgrims left England (1720ff) where King George (I, II, III) was the self-proclaimed head of the church.

In church history, the term "*free church*" meant the church operated independent of and free of any governmental controls. When churches enter into highly restrictive contracts with the government to obtain some government privilege, such organizations waive their natural, God-given, unalienable rights to carry out its mission without interference from state bureaucracies. When a church has to ask the government for permission to do this or that, the Headship of Christ is compromised. The Scripture warns: "*Be ye **not** unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness (the church) with unrighteousness (the government)?*" (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Plain and simple -- the trend of modern churches to incorporate as 501 c 3 organizations has become a contract with the Devil causing churches to forsake the headship of Christ and to adopt the IRS as head of a not-for-profit organization which is a "*fiction*." A *living corpus of Christ* has no business with a dead corpse (corporation<sup>25</sup>) – an artificial person or legal entity subject to the State. The church is the *living body (soma)* of Christ and subject to Him *alone*.

Do you remember **Victor Hugo's story**, *Les Miserables*? After escaping from the clutches of the police, Jean Valjean finds refuge in a convent. Though the French police knew he was inside, the authorities had no jurisdiction in God's house. It was the sense the church was under command of a higher power than that of Rome that led the Christians to engage the mission of evangelism and to conquer the known world.

What does all this mean? When we grasp the plan of God, the power of God, and the position of Christ, we realize our riches in Christ and have power to serve Him better.

**Pastor Ken Gaub** tells the story of the time he was traveling on I-75 with his family from Pennsylvania back to his home in Yakima, Washington. Discouraged and feeling the need to stretch, he stopped to feed his family at a near-by Dairy Queen and to take a walk. While on this short stretch, he heard a telephone

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<sup>25</sup> A corporation is a legal entity separate from its owners (shareholders), acting as a distinct "person" with the ability to own property, enter into contracts, and sue or be sued (Google AI – retrieved June 2025). Corporations are entities that act as a single, fictional person. Much like an actual person, a corporation may sue, be sued, lend, and borrow (U.S. Legal).

ring in a nearby telephone booth. He picked it up, and the operator asked for Ken Gaub. He nearly fainted. A lady named Millie was struggling with thoughts of suicide. She heard Ken speak and decided to call him because she thought he could help. Picking up a pencil she wrote down the first number that came to her mind. It was a telephone number of the telephone booth Ken was standing next to a phone booth in a city he had never visited before. Sensing the encounter was from God, he prayed for wisdom and helped the woman through her crisis. Ken, no longer discouraged himself, wrote an article, "*God Knows Where You Are.*"

The key to Christian service is tapping into our Highly Exalted Savior who reigns over All Things. When we operate under His Headship, life flows to us.

If we are like William Randolph Hearst seeking spiritual treasures, maybe it is because we do not understand the wealth available to us through Christ. This prayer is not about what we can get from God, but about insight into what we already have in Christ. We believe in the gospel to partake of its wealth; we pray to understand and enjoy and spend our wealth in the gospel. We may think we need money, or experiences, or psychological help, but we really need insight into God's plan, power, and Christ's glorious position at the right hand of the Father.

Let us study the Word of God and pray, "*Lord, open our eyes that we may see.*"

## **42. THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S HIGHLY EXALTED LIFE**

*Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

*1 Peter 3:22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.*

Christ is risen from the dead, and He ascended into Heaven. What is the meaning of His present risen life (PRL)?

Christians do not deny Christ ascended into heaven. Rather, it is the meaning of His present risen life (PRL) that is in dispute.

- Is Christ reigning now as the Messianic King or is he reigning as generic man?
- Is Christ enthroned on David's throne or is his enthronement on David's throne yet to come (in the millennial reign)? (Stockton, 2003, Revised 2012)

### **THE MEANING OF ACTS 2**

Classical dispensationalists (CDs) assert that Christ offered the Jews the Davidic kingdom (2 Samuel 7), but *postponed* it because Israel rejected their king. CDs believe Israel will one day be restored and that Jesus will rule in Jerusalem over his earthly people.

Covenant theologians (CTs) believe that Christ is reigning *now* in fulfillment of OT promises, that his PRL is Messianic, and that the “*millennium*” of Revelation 20 is a *present reality*. PD's believe that Joel's promise is partially fulfilled, but CDs believe that Peter was not claiming fulfillment, but something analogous to Joel two.

**What is the meaning of His reign?** What is the meaning of this present kingdom? Is it a fulfillment of the Davidic covenant? Is His reign now the millennial reign mentioned in Revelation 20? Was Joel 2 partially fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, or was the Pentecost even merely analogous to Joel 2?

*Luke 1:32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.*

*Luke 1:33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*

*Acts 3:33-36 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand . . . Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

Jesus is the Son of David. God has fulfilled the promise to Israel in that Jesus is the promised son of David. But, is He sitting on David's throne now or will that be something to come?

The key to solving this dispute may lay ***in linking*** certain concepts.

***The first linkage*** is the term “*sit*” (Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:34; 2:36). Being seated on David's throne is linked to being seated at God's right hand.

***The second link*** is the term “*throne*.” David was promised a throne (2 Samuel 7:12). The throne of David is linked to the throne of God in Acts 2:30ff. Peter argues for a fulfillment of the throne of David's promise and that David's throne is transferred to heaven. Since this be the case, the fulfillment is greater than the promise!! And, Christians who truly believe this behave differently than those whose hope of an exalted Christ relates to some alleged future kingdom program.

***The third link*** is the word “*pour*” (evkcew/, ekcheo) in 2:17 and the word “*poured*” (evxe,ceen, ekcheo) in 2:33. The fact that Peter uses the same word appears to indicate that the prophecy of Joel was partially fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. The eschatological hope that God would pour out His spirit on His people occurred in the middle of history instead of at the end of history leading us to conclude that the Eschaton has been inaugurated and that the gifts belonging to the kingdom of God have entered history by virtue of Christ's resurrection and glorification.

***The fourth link*** is the use of the terms “*Christ*” and “*Lord*.” The fact that Jesus is Lord and Christ indicates a messianic unity between David's promise and His ascension at the right hand of God. He *reigns*, **not** as generic humanity, but as Lord and Christ. It appears from the text that Christ was

inaugurated as Messiah and that His reign is Messianic. His *inauguration* has already happened; the *consummation* of his reign is yet to come.

**The fifth link** is the OT references themselves. Peter links Joel 2, Psalm 16, and Psalm 110 to provide evidence that Jesus' position at the right hand of God is a fulfillment of OT Scripture. The fact that Jesus, a man, is at the right hand of God is no small matter. One who lived among *us occupies the high throne and is in control of history*. Our response to Him is of utmost importance.

Zane Hodge disputes this and argues that Peter's use of "*this is that*" (tou/to, evstin to. eivrhme,non) is not intended to announce fulfillment of Joel chapter two, but signifies something that is analogous to the phenomenon described by Joel. Joel two is a "*last days*" promise and Hodge wants to reserve fulfillment *for the supposed millennial period of future history*. Hodge has a major point. Certainly, the "sign" portion of Joel's prophecy was not fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. Furthermore, Hodge does not see that Jesus' position at the right hand is messianic. To Hodge, Christ is simply ascended as generic humanity. There is nothing Messianic about sitting at the right hand of the Father (Hodges, A Dispensational Understanding of Acts 2, 1994).

Darrel Bock argues that part of Joel's prophecy was fulfilled on Pentecost. He says that "*this is that*" is not "this is *all* of that" or "this is *like* that," but means something like "*this is the beginning of that*" (Bock, 1992).

It appears from the text that Peter is announcing some kind of fulfillment but not total fulfillment. The Spirit has entered this present evil age in fulfillment of Joel 2 to gift men and women without accompanying judgment as iterated in Joel 2. Again, it is *now*, but *not-yet*. The Eschaton has been inaugurated with the ascended Christ, but has not yet been consummated. We have realized eschatology but not perfected eschatology.

My position: In the resurrection event and the visitation of the Holy Spirit, Peter sees an inaugurated Christ bestowing the gifts of the Eschaton upon a New Israel. Certainly, we have to lean toward the view that Jesus is the Christ and that ascending to the right hand of the Father is indeed a fulfillment of the Davidic promise . . . and, that the fulfillment is **always** greater than the promise. Who would have dreamed that Israel's Messiah would sit on the throne of God and rule the universe?

## **43. THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION**

***Acts 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.***

### **CHRIST IS KING**

The Book of Matthew presents Christ as the King. The magi asked, "*Where is he that is born king of the Jews?*" We see the King's lineage (1); the King's birth (2); the King's forerunner (3); the King's coronation (3); the King's testing (4); the King's legislative decrees (5-7); the King's powers (8-9); the King's Mission (10); The Reactions of the People to the King (11-20); Parables of the King (13); The

Climax in Jerusalem and the Triumph of the King (21-28). Matthew ends on an extreme positive note with Christ in authority over the nations.

Jesus precociously alluded to His Kingly judgment (Matthew 25:33) and when asked directly if he was King of the Jews, *He not only did not deny it, He affirmed it* (27:11). During his trial, his enemies mocked him saying, “*Hail, King of the Jews*” (27:29). His death warrant reads, “*This is Jesus the King of the Jews*” (27:37). At the cross, the King single handedly faced man’s trinity of evil: Satan, sin, and death. He emerged from the battlefield through the smoke and the haze, the Victor over man’s enemies. Death could not hold Him; Satan could not slay Him; sin had no hold on Him; the grave could not keep Him; Israel could not hide Him; and Rome could not restrain Him. He is King of the Jews; King of death; King over Satan; King over sin; and King of the nations. The only question is, “*Is he your King?*”

### **CHRIST IS HIGHLY EXALTED**

***Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.***

Peter’s first sermon ends on a positive, powerful note. Christ is enthroned as Lord and Christ. The ascension brought closure to the disciples’ earthly experience with Christ and gave them the ability to reasonably explain Christ’s disappearance from this earth.

His exaltation to the right hand of God implies the possession of divine honor -- honor belonging to deity (John 17:1-3 Hebrews 1:3; Philippians 2:5-12). Jesus was declared to be both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:34-37). No longer is He Messiah *designatus*. He is the *inaugurated* Messiah with de jure authority and power.

Not only was the Lord installed as the promised Messianic King, He was installed in marvelous, majestic glory. He was promised the *Davidic throne* earth; He received the *throne of God* in heaven. In a resurrected body, His departure from this earth must not have been by dissolution, but by *glorification*—a return to a state of glory which he had with the Father before the world was created (John 17:1-3). It appears the coming of the Holy Spirit was dependent on His glorification (John 7:37-39). . While on earth, our Lord was divine, but *divested* of glory. In his ascension, His glory was wonderfully *restored with royal splendor*. He is now stationed at the right hand of God in great glory and rules heaven and earth from His highly exalted position as the Lord Christ. Who would have dreamed? The fulfillment was gloriously greater than the promise!!

### **CHRIST IS REIGNING NOW**

***1 Corinthians 15:25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.***

Paul ends his letter to the Corinthians on a very positive note. In the midst of all the messy problems of the believers in the red light district of Corinth, Paul taught them about the reigning Christ and his ultimate triumph in history over the enemies of mankind.

**His PEL marked the beginning of his inauguration and reign** where He intends to defeat His enemies and deliver the kingdom to His Father (1 Corinthians 15:24ff). He has been exalted as “*Lord*” and *to Him every knee shall bow* (Philippians 2:12; 1 Timothy 6:15).

The term “*reign*” is a present, active infinitive. The context implies that Christ is reigning now from his position in heaven. The preposition “*tilt*” introduces a relationship. The subjunctive aorist “*put*” holds out the probability of Christ putting all his enemies under his feet; that is, the purpose of His reign is for the purpose of subduing His enemies.

Presently, the nations are in rebellion. State regimes resist the rule of God and despise His law. Christ reigns, but when will the end come? The end of this age has a *terminus ad quem* at the *parousia* which will complete the destruction of the anti-god forces. The decree of His administration is the defeat of all enemies and the nullification of all enemies that oppose the rule of God. When all the elect are safely in the kingdom, He will complete the destruction of God’s enemies, and transfer the kingdom to the Father. Life is messy, but God’s kingdom program will prevail.

### **CHRIST IS REIGNING NOW AS KING**

**His PEL means He reigns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.** Towards the nations, Christ is portrayed as *King of Kings* (1 Timothy 1:17; Revelation 1:5; 19:17) and *the Judge of all mankind* (2 Timothy 4:1). He is *the Great Lawgiver, the Great Judge, and the Great Executor*. The disciples expected an earthly, Davidic king who would rule in the land of Palestine over Israel. What they received was a heavenly, glorified King of kings who sits on God’s throne to rule over all the nations. He is the King of the Nations (Jeremiah 10:5). The word “*sitting*” at the right hand of God does not imply *resting*, but ***reigning***. He is **not** just *Messiah-elect*, but the *installed Lord Christ*. Sitting at the right hand of God is metaphorical language for divine omnipotence and divine sovereignty.

***Acts 17:6-7 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.***

Paul’s missionary team was accused of “*turning the world upside down*.” Actually, they turned the world “*right side up*!” The Roman Theater was dominated by Caesar worship. The drama intensified when Paul preached the kingdom of God and asserted there was Another King, King Jesus. Believing men became *Christocentric* rather than *anthropocentric*. A new Lawman was in town. Proclaiming Christ as King challenged the authority of Caesar and the validity of His laws. Affections and devotion was suddenly being transferred to King Jesus through gospel proclamation. *A new King meant new laws—a new world order in a Christocentric universe.*

***1 Timothy 1:17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.***

***1 Timothy 6:13-16 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.***

When Paul considered how Christ had saved him and put him into the ministry, Paul burst into praise to God. God has a throne and Christ sits at the right hand of the Father. Both are declared to be King and

Christ is declared to be the King of kings, and Lord of Lords. It is difficult to separate God and Christ in this passage. Gill explains:

*Now unto the King eternal,.... This doxology, or ascription of glory to God, on account of the grace bestowed upon the apostle, may be considered, either as referring to all the three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, who are the one and only God; and to whom all the attributes of wisdom, power, eternity, immortality, or incorruptibleness, and invisibility, belong; and who are jointly concerned in the grace bestowed upon any of the sons of men. Or else to God the Father, in agreement with a parallel place in [Romans 16:27](#) who is the only true God, in opposition to nominal and fictitious deities, though not to the exclusion of the Son and Spirit; and to whom the several epithets here used may be unquestionably given: he has shown his wisdom in the works of creation, providence, and grace; he is the everlasting King, or the King of ages, or of worlds; he is Maker of the worlds, and the Governor of them throughout all ages and generations; he only has immortality, and is the incorruptible God, and who is invisible, whose shape has never been seen, nor his voice heard: or else this may be thought to belong to Jesus Christ, since it is to him the apostle gives thanks for putting him into the ministry; and from him he obtained mercy, and received abundant grace; and he it was who came into the world to save sinners, and who showed forth all longsuffering in him, see [1 Timothy 1:12](#), upon which the apostle breaks out into this attribution of glory and honor, and which agrees with Jude 1:25.(Gill, Exposition of the Bible).*

### **CHRIST IS REIGNING NOW AS KING OF THE CHURCH**

The term “*King of the Church*” is not used in the NT, but the concept is there. John uses the term “*King of the saints (nations)*” which is a reference to Christ claiming jurisdiction over the nations (Revelation 15:3).

In Colossians, Paul informs believers that that the Father has “*rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His Beloved Son*” (Colossians 1:14). The picture is that of prisoners being rescued from Prison Island by the King and transferred by boat to the Land of Freedom—the kingdom of His Beloved Son. Paul wants the Colossians to know that their Deliverer is none other than the King of Creation and the King of the New Creation—the church. **His PEL means he has been installed as Head of the church**, the Head of God’s new creation. Since Christ rose from the grave, He is sat down at the right hand of God. This implies, sovereignty and power. All authority has been given unto Him (Matthew 28:18-20). All things are under his feet (Ephesians 1:22). He is the great Director, Leader, Guide, Head, and Supervisor of the new creation (Colossians 1:18). So powerful is Christ the Scripture informs us that *Jesus is the Head over all rule and authority* (Colossians 2:10). The term means “leader,” or “Commander,” or “Command and Control Center,” or “foremost” or “supremacy.” The **danger** at Colossae was that the believers might **not** esteem Christ as He rightly deserves (2:8) and therefore not give Him His proper place in the church (Colossians 2:19).

### **CHRIST IS THE VICTOR KING**

**His PEL means He is a Victor.** Jesus resurrection was a glorious victory over the enemies of sin, Satan, and death. His ascension was the coronation, the glorious parade, and the presentation of spoils to heavenly hosts. However, unlike earthly kings who stripped their captives and paraded them naked and impoverished through the streets of Rome, our Lord bathed, clothed, and decorated his captives with honor and robes of righteousness (Ephesians 4:7ff).



## **CHRIST IS KING OF THE NATIONS**

*Jeremiah 10:7 Who would not fear thee, O **King of nations**? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the **nations**, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee.*

*Jeremiah 10:10 But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting **king**: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.*

*Revelation 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou **King of Nations** (ethnon<sup>26</sup>).*

*Revelation 17:14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and **the Lamb shall overcome them**: for he is Lord of lords, and **King of kings**: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*

The hymn is called the “*Song of the Lamb*” a.k.a. the “*Song of Moses*.” John uses the term “*King of the saints (nations)*” which is a reference to Christ claiming jurisdiction over the nations (Revelation 15:3). It is a title referring YHWH in the OT. All authority is given unto Christ, and He gave His marching orders to the disciples to Christianize the world (Matthew 28:18-20).

In chapter 15 of Revelation we see our Lord taking possession of the nations by His judgments in history. Christ is **not** a local deity. He is **not** just King of the Jews **nor** is He merely King over the church. He is **not** one among many. He is Lord and King of the Nations. Revelation presents a positive view of Christ's reign. His redemptive kingdom program advances: Saints sing, “*Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name?*” (Revelation 15:4). To John, resistance seems like folly. The evidence for the risen, victorious Christ is overwhelming and only an insane mind can deny its infallible proofs. War is declared, but victory goes to the “Lamb” for “*He is Lord of lords, and King of kings*.”

## **CHRIST IS THE KING-PRIEST**

**His PEL means he has entered into a new ministry as Great High Priest.** Towards the church, Christ is viewed as Head of the church, High Priest, Shepherd, Sustainer, Gift Giver, and Cleanser of His people (Colossians 1:15-18; Hebrews 5; Ephesians 1; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Corinthians 12). He is not only the Sacrifice for their sins, but acting High Priest whose very life intercedes for the believer (Romans 5:10; Hebrews 7:25). After the order of Melchizedek, Jesus is the King Priest. No King was able to be both king and priest in Israel, but because the power of His endless life, He is both.

**His PEL means Jesus is in a position to help all God's children.** He comes to the aide of His people and wages war on their behalf by using His *sword*, the Word of God (Revelation 19:13). Through Him we can draw near to God (Hebrews 7:19). He is on the Throne of Grace. Because He is sovereign, He has authority and power and riches to comfort His people. Because His throne is one of grace, He can overlook the faults of petitioners and the weakness of their prayers (Hebrews 4:16).

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<sup>26</sup> Revelation 15: 3 has a textual variation (saints or nations). The use of “nations” rather than “saints” is preferred because of the context. See 15:6.

## **CHRIST IS THE WARRIOR KING**

***Revelation 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.***

In Revelation 19, John has a vision of Christ entering history to defeat the anti-god forces. The vision before us is personified by **the Rider on a white horse** showing us how Christ wages war from His position in heaven. The Rider on the White horse is Christ. The imagery represents his activity in His PEL, **not** what He will accomplish at the *parousia*. The vision shows us that it is through the gospel and the proclamation of the Word of God that He penetrates society to win souls and to root out evil. Christ *will indeed* come again, but this is **not** a picture of the Second Advent. It is an image of Christ coming in history to defeat His adversaries. We have seen in previous chapters the defeat of the beast and the destruction of the great harlot. Now we see *the means* of that defeat and the sure and ultimate destiny of the unholy trio of evil.

Christians are more aware of Christ's accomplishments on earth and many look with hope for the Parousia, but few seem to understand Christ's administration of the kingdom during this age. Perhaps, this is why Paul prayed the following prayer:

*Ephesians 1:18-23 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,*

*19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,*

*20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,*

*21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:*

*22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,*

*23 Which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.*

As we look at the world and all its conflicts, our government and all its fallacies, we tend to become negative about the future. But, every statement about the risen Christ is positive. He is a King. He reigns now. All hope need **not** be deferred to the Parousia. He is waging war against the anti-god forces now. He is winning! In and through *gospel proclamation*, souls are entering the kingdom of God's beloved Son. Our task is to believe and obey—and, to claim our authority as ambassadors of the King of kings.

## **44. THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S PRIESTLY MINISTRY**

### **THE MEANING OF BEING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD**

### PILLAR THREE: THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S HISTORY

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Exodus 15:6, 12  | The right hand appears to be a symbol of power and might.     |
| Deuteronomy 33:2 | The right hand is a symbol of power and authority.            |
| Psalms 16:11     | The right hand is the source of spiritual pleasures.          |
| Psalms 17:7      | The right hand is a place of refuge.                          |
| Psalms 20:6      | The right hand is a source of power.                          |
| Psalms 21:8      | The right hand is a source of knowledge and power.            |
| Psalms 44:3      | The right hand is a source of deliverance.                    |
| Psalms 45:9      | The right hand is a source of knowledge.                      |
| Psalms 45:9      | The right hand is a privileged place.                         |
| Psalms 48:10     | The right hand is a source of righteousness.                  |
| Psalms 63:8      | The right hand a source of strength for the believer.         |
| Psalms 80:15     | The right hand is the cause of Israel's existence.            |
| Psalms 89:13     | The right hand is full of might and above all.                |
| Psalms 89:42     | The right hand means authority over others.                   |
| Psalms 98:1      | The right hand the source of skill and victory.               |
| Psalms 109:6     | What is at the right hand is critical for success.            |
| Psalms 109:31    | He can stand at the right hand of the needy to give strength. |
| Psalms 110:1     | Adonai is invited to sit at God's right hand.                 |
| Psalms 110:5     | Because Adonai is exalted, kings shall be crushed.            |
| Psalms 121:5     | What is at the right hand is critical; the Lord is a shade.   |
| Psalms 139:10    | The psalmist expresses faith that God's right hand will lead. |
| Psalms 144:8     | It is bad to have falsehood at thy right hand.                |
| Zechariah 3:1    | Satan can be at one's right hand.                             |
| Matthew 5:30     | The right hand can be source of evil.                         |
| Matthew 26:64    | Jesus predicts He will be at God's right hand.                |
| Acts 2:25        | A quote: David sees the Lord at his right hand.               |

### **NT PASSAGES ON THE PRL**

### PILLAR THREE: THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S HISTORY

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Acts 2:33          | His PRL means exaltation to the right hand of God.         |
| Acts 2:33          | From His PRL He sends the Holy Spirit                      |
| Acts 5:31          | He grants repentance to Israel and forgives sins.          |
| Acts 7:35          | He stands at attention, as Stephen is martyred.            |
| Romans 5:10        | We are saved by His PRL.                                   |
| Romans 8:34        | He is PRL defends us against charges of condemnation       |
| Ephesians 1:19     | From His exalted position, he sends power.                 |
| Ephesians 1:20     | All authority is under his feet.                           |
| Ephesians 2:5      | We are raised with Him and represented by Him.             |
| Ephesians 3:12ff   | He is at work among His people dispensing power.           |
| Colossians 2:9, 10 | Fullness is connected to His PRL.                          |
| Colossians 3:1     | He is at the right hand of God.                            |
| Philippians 1:12   | He is in an exalted position.                              |
| 1 Timothy 6:15     | Jesus/God is called the only sovereign, King of kings.     |
| Hebrews 1:13       | An OT quote: Enemies are being defeated during His PRL.    |
| Hebrews 8:1        | He performs priestly duties at the right hand of God.      |
| Hebrews 10:12      | He sat down at the right hand of God.                      |
| Hebrews 12:2       | He sat down at the right hand of God.                      |
| 1 Peter 3:22       | All powers are subject to Him.                             |
| Revelation 1-3     | He walks in the midst of His people judging and rewarding. |
| Revelation 5:7     | He holds the scroll while on the right hand of God.        |
| Revelation 19:11   | He wages war on behalf of the saints.                      |
| Revelation 19:16   | Jesus appears to help His saints as King of kings.         |

### **INSIGHTS FROM HEBREWS**

Two branches of authority culminate in the ascension of Christ: the authority of a king, and the authority of a priest. No king in Israel was permitted to be a priest and those who assumed the role were stricken with leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:19); Likewise, no priest was permitted to administrate the civic affairs of the nation except as a temporary intervener as in the case of Samuel (1 Samuel 15). However, *in Christ we have the fulfillment of the Melchizedek Model: the administration of a King and Priest.*

## **HIS QUALIFICATIONS**

Every man longs for a contingency that understands his needs, and that will represent his cause before the Almighty.

### **His Great Training**

For it became him... in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings (Hebrews 2:10).

### **His Great Attitude**

He is not ashamed to call them brethren (Hebrews 2:11).

### **His Great Identification with the human race**

. . . in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same (Hebrews 2:15).

### **His Great Appointment**

He is an appointed High Priest (Hebrews 2:17).

### **His Great Service to Humanity**

He is able to help those who are being tempted (Hebrews 2:18).

### **His Great Accomplishments**

He neutralized the Devil's power (Hebrews 2:14).

He freed humanity from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:15).

He helped Abraham's seed (Hebrews 2:16).

He made a propitiation for man's sins (Hebrews 2:17).

### **His Great Character**

He is merciful (Hebrews 2:17).

He is faithful Hebrews (Hebrews 3:2).

He is sympathetic (Hebrews 3:15).

### **His Divine Authority**

A man could not become a priest by popular vote, by usurpation of the office, or by application. He had to be appointed by God. Christ is priest by Divine appointment (Hebrews 3:1; 5:1).

## **HIS CAPABILITIES**

### **He is able to Save**

***For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to save them that are tempted (Hebrews 2:18).***

The word “*succour*” or “*save*” is the Greek word “*boathasa*” (bohqh/sa) which means “to help” or “to cry.” From His position in heaven, He is able to come to the aid of one trapped in the net of temptation.

Paul speaks of Phebe as a “*succourer*” (prostates) of many. The feminine form of this word denotes a “*protectress*.” It is a word of dignity and respect. It was a title given to important citizens in the city of Athens who had the responsibility of overseeing the welfare of resident aliens who were without civic rights. Since men are aliens to holiness, Jesus is our helper before the holy throne of heaven (Vine’s Expository Dictionary, 1966, Vol IV. Set-Z, p. 88).

Able to help, Paul prays *that our eyes might be opened and that we might know the greatness of his power toward us who believe* (Ephesians 1:18, 19).

A story is told about Amintas, a Greek soldier who was to be tried for treason. When the verdict was guilty and he was ready to be sentenced, his brother, who lost an arm in battle, appeared in court and said, “Amintas is guilty, but for Aeschylus sake, he shall go free.” Jesus is our advocate who represents us in the High Court.

### **HE IS ABLE TO SYMPATHIZE**

***Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.***

The word “*touched with the feelings*” comes from *sumposion* (sumpaqh/sai) denoting “to drink together,” hence a “drinking party.” The idea is that Christ can sit down with us and identify with our feelings. Hence, we get the word “sympathy.” The word *infirmity* is “*astheneia*” (avsqenei,aij) and it means “lack of strength” (*a*, negative; and *sthenos*, strength) (Vines, Vol. II: “impotent,” p. 252).

Christ sympathizes and understands our infirmities. Because He gloriously exhausted his limitations in temptation, he is able to help believers in times of suffering. However, He does not empathize or condone sin. Sin is not forgivable. Specific sins, however, can be pardoned. Sin is always condemned and there is never a good reason to commit a particular sin. As our Advocate, He is able to strengthen us to resist sin and restore us when we do sin.

### **HE IS ABLE TO SAVE**

***Hebrews 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save (sw,|zein) them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.***

The idea here is that Christ is able to bring to completion the salvation of those who draw near to God. The word “*uttermost*” (pantele.j) means “completely” or “utterly.” He is able to present believers without fault (Hebrews 8:8; 1 Corinthians 1:8) before God. There is no sin for which he cannot deliver and there is no problem for which He does not have a solution.

### **HIS SUPPLICATION**

**Not supplication, but advocacy:** The word *parakleton* (para,klhton) suggest the capacity to intervene. The term was used in a court of justice to denote a legal assistant, counsel for the defense, an advocate who spoke on behalf of the charged (1 John 2:1). The idea here is not that Jesus is in heaven agonizing and pleading our case before a reluctant God, but One whose position before the throne of God claims the rights of our inheritance (Romans 8:33-34).

**Not pleading, but presence.** Jesus priestly ministry is not vocal. Rather it is His representative presence that assures us that we are accepted. The High Priest in Israel did not intercede with words on the Day of Atonement. Silently, he entered the Presence with blood. It is the blood that speaks. Christ's presence at the throne assures us of salvation to the uttermost.

**Not good, but best.** God did not send an angel to represent us, but His Son. God did not send an inferior to help us, but His superior Son.

*Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25).*

When Elisha heard the news about the death of the prophet's son, he sent his servant and his staff. The sorrowing mother would not settle for anything less but the presence of the man of God. When the issue is life and death, a delegate won't do. If our sins could be purged by sending an angel, God would have done so. Not angels, but the Son of God advocates our case in heaven (2 Kings 4:29).

**Not temporal, but perpetual.** His representation is not for a moment in time, but for eternity.

*Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25).*

We would not live for a single day unless He lives continually. Because He has life within himself, His life is a guarantee that we will live forever.

**Prevailing prayer; not perfect prayers.** Another ministry of Christ is that he receives our prayers. But our prayers are imperfect. How can they be received before a perfect God? Our precious Priest hears our flawed prayers and mingles them with the incense of His presence before the Father. When Manoah, the father of Samson, offered a young goat to the Lord, the Angel of the Lord (Jesus Christ) who spoke to him ascended in the flame (Judges 13:19ff). The inferior offering was accepted because Christ, the Angel of the Lord, ascended with the offering. Our prayers prevail, not because they are perfect, but because Christ is perfect and mingles them with his own wishes. It is His wonderful presence before the throne on our behalf that gives us confidence that our prayers prevail.

### Application

**Comfort:** It's great to have a representative in the White House that is sympathetic with our concerns, but it infinitely more significant that we have a representative man sitting beside God's throne who is sympathetic with our causes. We ought to take great comfort from the fact that our Great High Priest is not an angel or a computer that merely records our request, but a man who understands our human needs. There is One in heaven Who understands us.

**Authority:** This world may balk and gawk at the authority of Christ and His Word, but history is moving toward a grand consummation where all will be forced to acknowledge His authority. In the end, He alone will reign, and it our privilege to acknowledge that authority today and to represent Him as ambassadors.

*Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power (1 Corinthians 15:24).*

*Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him (Hebrews 2:8).*

*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).*

**Gospel:** Christ has ascended and is sitting at the right hand of God. If one wants to enter His kingdom, he must acknowledge His authority. Those who believe His resurrection, turn from sin, and confess His Lordship can become a member of His family and a citizen of Heaven. In believing, one will have a Representative who will represent him before the Highest Court in the Universe.

### **APPLYING THE PEL OF CHRIST TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

In 2 Kings two, the men of Jericho come to Elijah and said to him, "Behold now, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful." By pleasant, the men of Jericho meant "well situated." Because Jericho is located 1300 feet below sea level just north of the Dead Sea, it has a warm climate. Besides being the oldest city on earth, it is a beautiful city full of palm trees—a refreshing oasis in the middle of a desert. It had plenty of water and a growing season that lasted all year. Because it was "**well situated**," it became a famous winter resort for kings.

But, Jericho had a dirty little secret. Visitors to the area were always impressed with the fruit orchards, the springs that flowed in the area, and the warm, gracious climate. But, the insiders knew that the water was foul and that the fruit trees were unfruitful. The word "*unfruitful*" (lkov', shakol) means "bereaved." That is, just before harvest, the fruit would drop to the ground and spoil. Fruitlessness was the town's dirty little secret.

Likewise, many Christians have lives like Jericho. On the outside they look and talk like Christians. They do all that Christians are supposed to do. And, they have a reputation for being devout and respectable. But, if the truth were known, they are miserable, barren, and fruitless in their Christian life.

To solve the problem, Elijah took *salt* and poured it into the little stream flowing through the city. Amazingly, salt solved the problem. I don't know of a scientific reason that salt would solve the town's water problem. The reason Elijah used salt was because of salt's typical import and the lesson God wanted to pass on to the ages. Salt is a preservative, and it is *symbolic of the present risen life of Christ* (Leviticus 2:13, Ezra 7:22; Matthew 5:13; Mark 9:50; Colossians 4:6). That is, the key to fruitfulness is communion with the present risen life of Christ.

The Son could do nothing of himself. He lived in dependence on His Father.

*<sup>NAS</sup> John 5:19 Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner,*



It is possible to see same kind of dynamic power in our lives.

*<sup>NAS</sup> John 14:12 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father.*

Because Jesus lives, the believer has Christ's life at work within him.

*<sup>NAS</sup> John 14:19 . . . because I live, you shall live also."*

We cannot produce fruit unless we tap into the resources of the present risen life of Christ.

*<sup>NAS</sup> John 15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

When our lives are barren and unfruitful, *we need salt*. Outward appearance will not do. We need power flowing through our spiritual veins so we can be holy, and boldly proclaim the gospel, and win souls for Christ. But, where can we obtain such power? That kind of power is only found at the right hand of God in the highly exalted Savior, that is, His present exalted life.

*Ephesians 1:19-22 I pray that, "the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know . . . what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet . . ."*

## **45. THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S COMING GLORY**

Christ is coming again. What does it mean?

The framework of Paul's eschatological theology is the dualism between "*this age*" and "*the age to come*." The age to come has entered history in the person and work of Christ to deliver men from this present evil age. The age of the *Eschaton* has begun and will be consummated at the Parousia of our Lord. The fundamental meaning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ is **consummation**.

### **KEY PASSAGES ON THE PAROUSIA**

1 Thessalonians 4:17 and following is a critical passage on the Parousia of Christ, and it is the only passage that mentions the "rapture."

The **great subject** of this passage is the Parousia of our Lord (4:15). The word "*parousia*" is a Greek word that means "coming" or "presence" or "arrival."

The **great purpose** of Paul's instruction is to comfort those who had lost loved ones and to encourage them with the knowledge of Christ Parousia (4:13).

The **great hope** is grounded in the resurrection of Christ: "God will bring with Jesus those . . ." (4:14). The Christian knows that those who die in the Lord go to be with Jesus. One day, they will appear with Christ at His Parousia.

The **great assurance** that death is not the end is, "*The Lord's own word*" (4:15)

The **great sounds** that will announce the Parousia are:

- **The victor's shout:** a shout so mighty it will penetrate all the seas, all the graves, all the coffins of planet earth. It will wake the dead.
- **The voice of the archangel:** The leader of the heavenly hosts raises his voice for there is a great commotion in heaven when Jesus descends.
- **The trumpet of God:** Like bugle calls in the army, the ranks of the redeemed will fall into place when the trumpet sounds. At the last trump, the dead will rise (1 Corinthians 15:52).

The parousia is about the **great Savior's** appearance: "*The Lord himself shall descend . . .*" This is no substitute. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself who will come for His saints (Acts 1:11; John 14:3). He will come suspended in the clouds in regal glory as a bridegroom receiving his bride. This is the greatest reunion in history

The **great events** are mentioned next:

- The dead in Christ shall rise first. Not all the dead will rise, only those known by Christ (John 10:27). This is not a resurrection of the dead, but among the dead. Compare Jesus words to Lazarus: "*Lazarus, come forth.*"
- Living believers will be "*caught up*" (raptured) into the presence of Christ. It will be total and universal. Earth dwellers will be left to suffer wrath and destruction. There will be a physical transformation whereby believers will be suited with immortal, spiritual bodies. Note the kind of body that will be raised (1 Corinthians 15:35-56):
- It will be a heavenly body (15:41);
- It will be imperishable (15:42)
- It will be glorious (15:43)
- It will be powerful (15:43)
- It will be a spiritual body (15:44)
- It will be like the resurrected body of Christ (15:49)
- It will be immortal (15:53).
- The great meaning of the parousia:
- It is a moment of joy for the Lord and for his people.

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- It is a reunion of the Lord with his people,
- It is the reunion of people with their bodies.
- The great positions on the “rapture” surrounding the parousia:
- Pretribulation rapture
- Midtribulation rapture (pre-wrath).
- Posttribulation rapture
- Partial rapture

While the “*rapture*” is a position belonging to the field of eschatology, one needs to see in the context of I Thessalonians four that the rapture is inseparably linked to the second coming of Christ. It is impossible in this context to separate the rapture by seven years from the second coming. Exegesis will not allow it. Furthermore, one should note that a terrible tribulation follows the Parousia of our Lord in 1 Thessalonians 5. We can infer from this passage that the Lord’s appearance will be for salvation of God’s people and judgment upon the wicked.

The **great exhortation**: “*Encourage each another with these words*” (4:18). The *parousia* is the Christian hope. He has been gone a long time. Though loved ones have passed we know that we will meet again. “*Even so come, Lord Jesus.*”

### THE RAPTURE

The key word in this passage is the *parousia* **not** the rapture. The word *rapture* (a`rpaghso,meqa, *harpagasometha*) is translated into English with the word “*caught up*,” and it means “to be snatched away.”

The word *rapture* is Latin word (*rapere*), but in recent times it has developed tremendous theological significance to many Christians. The root of this word (a`rpa,zw, *harpazo*) is defined as “to snatch,” or “to steal away,” and is translated “take” (Matthew 11:12), “spoil” (Matthew 12:29), and “catcheth away” (Matthew 13:19). The “*rapture*” simply means “*caught up*” and this catching away of the saints is so united with the Parousia of our Lord that it is impossible to separate the rapture from our Lord’s Second Coming.

The *Parousia* is the main event. The rapture is an action in the event. The rapture’s main significance is the believer’s union with Christ. Nothing is said about what happens before this union or after this union. Furthermore, we are given no hint as to when it will happen. The rapture’s second significance is the defeat of death and the transformation of the body by virtue of the resurrection.

To separate rapture and resurrection, and rapture from the *Parousia* is going beyond Scripture. The “*rapture*” will occur at the time of the Lord’s *Parousia*, **not** before. There is no justification, in the mind of this author, for separating the two events by seven years. Furthermore, to build a doctrine around a verb (“*caught up*,” a`rpaghso,meqa, a future, passive, indicative, 1<sup>st</sup> person plural) is **not** a sound theological practice. Generally speaking, doctrines must be built on nouns, **not** verbs.

### THE THEOLOGY OF PAROUSIA

The second coming of Christ will manifest what has already been inaugurated in history. His coming will usher in the age to come. In the OT, His coming was called “the Day of the Lord” (Amos 5:18; Isaiah 2:12ff).

The second coming means **consummation** (1 Corinthians 15:24): What was *inaugurated* in history during Christ's presence on earth, the kingdom of God, will be *consummated* at His Second Coming. This is the day when God will establish His kingdom in the world, bring salvation to the people of God and rain judgment on the wicked (Zephaniah 1:14ff; Joel 1:14ff; Malachi 4:1-4; Acts 2:20; 2 Peter 3:10). The *Day of the Lord* (1 Thessalonians 5:2) and *the Day of God* (2 Peter 3:12) and *the Day of Christ* (Philippians 1:10) appear to refer to the same day. It seems unreasonable to whittle these terms down into distinct, separate doctrines... They refer to the same event.

***The second coming means a happy reunion:*** When Christ returns, the believer will be united with Christ and with his saved loved ones.

***The second coming means a new revelation:*** Christ's hidden sovereignty will be made public. The whole world will know that He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. All will bow the knee. All will confess that He is who He claimed to be (2 Thessalonians 1:7).

***The second coming means wonderful redemption:*** When Christ returns he will rapture the church. Believers will be redeemed from death and united with their resurrected bodies (1 Corinthians 15:45ff).

***The second coming means marvelous regeneration:*** At this time Christ will restore the earth to its original glory (Isaiah 11:1ff; Revelation 21).

***The second coming means terrifying judgment:*** Christ will save His people, but He will judge and destroy His enemies (Matthew 21:41; Luke 20:16; 1 Corinthians 6:13). Today is a day of grace that presents men with an opportunity for salvation. His coming will be a day of justice, a day of wrath with no opportunity for salvation (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:3ff).

## **THE THEOLOGY OF BODILY RESURRECTION**

(Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35ff):

The term “*resurrection*” is a noun and therefore a doctrine to be studied and appreciated. It is the great hope of the Christian faith. The term *resurrection* does not imply a physical resurrection, but a *bodily* resurrection. Paul shares five characteristics of the bodily resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:

- **Heavenly** (15:41): The body is germane to that place we call “heaven.”
- **Imperishable** (15:42): The body will be raised “imperishable” (avfqarsi,a/, aphatharsia). Man's present body is subject to corruption, i.e. it is subject to death and decay. The resurrected body will not be subject to deterioration of any kind.
- **Glorious** (15:43): Man's present body is subject to shame and dishonor. Pimples, zits, wrinkles, and age spots plague human flesh. The new body will be beautiful, full of splendor and glory.
- **Powerful** (15:43): The word “power” comes from the Greek word *dynamis* which means “strength” or “ability” or “energy.” The new body, unlike the natural body, will never be tired or weak. It will be energized with eternal life.

- **Spiritual** (15:44): By “spiritual” Paul does not mean immaterial. Rather, he means the body will be fit for the Spirit and the human spirit. The natural body is often at odds with the wishes of the Spirit. Not so, the resurrected body.
- **Immortal** (15:52): The natural body is mortal, subject to death. The resurrected body will be immortal, not subject to the possibility of death.

The term *resurrection* is associated with the phrase “*second resurrection*” (a bodily resurrection as opposed to a spiritual resurrection). The “*first resurrection*” is either the salvation of the soul when it is united with Christ (Ephesians 2:3-5) when one believes, or it is the migration of the soul to be with the Lord at the time of death (John 5:25; Revelation 20:4-5). The second resurrection is the *bodily resurrection* that will take place when Christ returns to Earth for his saints (1 Thessalonians 5:17ff).

The fact of the His coming/rapture/resurrection, not the timing of the coming/rapture/resurrection, is the good news. The resurrection is an assertion, not an inference.

The doctrine of the “*rapture*” originated with **dispensational theory**. Dispensationalists are noted for multiplying distinctions in theological words. For example, they will make a distinction between the term *rapture* and the term *resurrection*. However, this difference is linguistic rather than theological and the believer should not see them as two different events. According to dispensationalists, there are four resurrections in their theological system: (a) the rapture/resurrection that supposedly happens before the tribulation; (b) the resurrection of dead believing Jews after the tribulation; (c) a resurrection at the end of the supposed millennium, and (d) the resurrection of the wicked at the end of the millennium. *The problem here is one of multiplying distinctions that do not necessarily exist in Scripture.*

Remember, these ideas are theories that come, not from exegesis, but from theological schemes and constructs. John Walvoord admitted in his book, the Rapture Question, the dispensational *secret rapture theory* is derived from a theological construct—the difference between Israel and the church. This is a rigid difference that other scholars outside of dispensational circles do not accept (Walvoord, 1957, p. 15).

According to dispensational theory, the church is a *parenthesis*, an *intercalation*, or *hiatus* in God’s program for Israel. In order for Israel’s program to resume, the church must be *raptured* before the supposed tribulation period prior to the second coming of Christ. However, since Abraham was a Gentile and God’s redemptive program involves the salvation of Gentiles, it is more correct to see OT Israel as the parenthesis in God’s redemptive program to reach the world with His gospel.

In contrast to the *dispensational theory* of resurrection is the **amillennial view** that there are only two bodily resurrections in history: (a) the resurrection of the believer when the Lord comes, and the resurrection of the unbelieving dead at the end of history (John 5:25ff; 1 Corinthians 15: 20ff; Revelation 20:1ff). According to this view, the church is not a hiatus in Israel’s program, but the pinnacle work in God’s redemptive program whereby Jews and Gentiles are united together in one body (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:16).

## **A SUMMARY OVERVIEW**

The words *revelation*, *coming*, *manifestation* and *rapture* all refer to the same event.

There is a resurrection of the *just* and the *unjust*. The righteous will be resurrected unto *salvation*. The wicked will be resurrected unto *damnation*. Two resurrections is a common theme in Scripture and it appears they will occur approximately at the same time (Daniel 12:1-4; Matthew 3:7; John 5:25-29; Luke 14:14; 20:35)

Paul's hope was not a general resurrection like the Pharisees (Philippians 3:14ff), but the "*out-resurrection*" (th.n evxana, stasin, ek-anastasin), i.e. to participate in the resurrection of the just

The resurrection will occur at the last day (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54:11:24) and at the last trump (1 Corinthians 15:52). Interestingly, Paul said this transformation would take place at "the last trump." If one takes this passage literally, one must conclude that the rapture will happen at the last trumpet sound. Literally speaking, there will be no more trumpet calls after this one. Thus, many connect the coming of Christ with the seventh trumpet or the bowl judgments in Revelation.

The resurrection will happen at the Christ's Second Advent (1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

### **THEOLOGY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

All Christian scholars agree His coming will be a time when God will establish His kingdom. The kingdom of God is the rule of God, the eschatological goal of redemption.

#### **Will the kingdom come in three stages?**

Premillennialists think so! The basic text for this argument comes from 1 Corinthians 15:23-25.

*But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; (insert this present age) afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. (Insert a 1000 years) Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.*

According to this argument there are **three stages of the kingdom of God** : (a) Christ the firstfruits—the bronze age, (2) they that are Christ's at his coming—the silver age or the 1000 year millennium, (c) "then cometh the end . . ." or the golden age of the eternal kingdom. The premillennialists insert 1000 years between "his coming" and "then cometh the end." They reason that since there is a considerable amount of time, 2000 years plus, between Christ's first coming and His second coming, there could be 1000 years between His second coming and the end. This is Ladd's argument.

The *amillennialists* deny a three stage kingdom and opt for a **two stage kingdom**: (a) Christ inaugurated his kingdom on earth during at His first coming—the silver age, and (b) He will consummate the kingdom when he returns—the golden age of the eternal kingdom.

In reference to the above verse, it is exegetically awkward to place 1000 years between "*coming*" and "*end*." It is kind of like putting round peg in a square hole. The phrase "*then cometh the end*" could just as well be connected to His *parousia* or "*coming*," i.e. his arrival in history will signal the end of history and launch His eternal kingdom program.

#### **Will Christ establish an earthly silver age known as the millennium?**

*Premillennialists* think so. *Amillennialists* do not. *Postmillennialist* have an entirely different construct which is not discussed here.

*Premillennialists* foresee Christ establishing God's rule on earth lasting for a 1000 years. He will come before the millennium. The problem with this view is not only hermeneutical, but theoretical: How does one interpret Revelation 20? How can resurrected people and non-resurrected people live on the same earth? How can premillennialists justify a literal hermeneutic in a book devoted to symbols?

*Amillennialists* foresee Christ establishing God's rule on a renewed earth or on an extraterrestrial one lasting forever, hence, no millennium. Revelation 20 is interpreted symbolically rather than literally. The problem with this view is also hermeneutical. Chapter 19 appears to support the second coming of Christ. Therefore, chapter 20 must take the believer back to the beginning of this age making this age the millennium.

### **WHAT ABOUT ISRAEL?**

The issue here is whether God will save Israel as a whole nation<sup>27</sup> before the consummation of history. **Dispensationalism** advances a literal, historical fulfillment of God's promises to Israel in history. Dispensationalists believe God will save Israel and preserve them for a glorious future in an earthly millennial reign of Christ. The key to this belief is Daniel 9 and Romans 11:24-25.

**The problem with this view is twofold:** (a) Israel's promises were conditional. All contracts call for responsibility either implicitly or explicitly. Israel appears to have forfeited her inheritance because of unbelief and disobedience; (b) there is no NT theology regarding the subject of Israel's future restoration. For this reason, dispensationalists cling to these verses as proof texts for this view.

**Amillennialists** do not exclude the possibility of a dynamic conversion of Jews at the end of history. But, they insist Israel must come into the fold on *church ground*, **not** *geo-political grounds*. God has a glorious future for his bride, not geo-political Israel. The phrase "and all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:25) does not mean *every Jew* or *the entire nation*. Paul is saying, that in spite of the fact that branches have been cut off, all true Israelites indeed will be saved (Romans 9:6). Two times the word "*now*" is found in this section (11:30, 31), and the word *now* implied a third time. *Now* is the day of salvation. *Now* is the time for Jews to come to Christ. *Now* is the time for all men to place their trust in Israel's Messiah.

Furthermore, amillennialists do **not** foresee a millennial age with Israel as the Queen of the Nations. Generally speaking, amillennialists see the church as the New Israel of God composed of the spiritually responsive from the nation of Israel and the spiritually responsive among the Gentiles which comprise the church, God's *ekklesia* (Matthew 16:15-18; Ephesians 2:12ff).

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<sup>27</sup> The term "Israel" has at least four connotations: (a) the OT people of God, a nation descending from Abraham; (b) the true people of God who have a circumcised heart who are set in contrast to the unbelieving Hebrew or proselyte (Romans 2:25ff). This "Israel" would also be called the believing "remnant" (Isaiah 10:20; Micah 5:7; Romans 9:27); (c) Spiritual Israel made up of believing Jews and Gentiles a.k.a. the church (Galatians 6:16); and (d) the modern state of Israel made up of Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, Jews by faith but lacking any genetic link to Abraham, and made up of non-believing, secular, political citizens of a nation called "Israel." Many people error in thinking that the modern state of Israel has a genetic link to the people of the Old and New Testament. This is a presumption that goes against the facts of history. Today's "Jews" are Jews by faith not by genetics.

**Bruce Waltke** states my position well:

*"If revised dispensationalism produced one passage in the entire New Testament that clearly presents the resettlement of national Israel in the land, I would join them" (Waltke, 1992, p. 357).*

### **THE GOAL OF HISTORY**

The goal of God's redemptive program is the restoration of man to God, of man to his body and mind, of man to man, and of the environment to man which has been disrupted by evil and sin. The kingdom of God is about the defeat of his enemies (death, sin, Satan) and the restoration of order to the universe. This restoration began at the cross (Colossians 1:20) and will be consummated at the *Parousia* of our Lord (1 Corinthians 15:25). His reign began at His ascension and will be consummated in the eschatological future.

The final restoration will include the material world: Two issues surface here. Will God renew this earth? Or, will He take us away to a new world and a new order?

The OT raises the hope of *a new heaven and a new earth* (Isaiah 65, 66) and the NT foresees a new heaven and a new earth coming down from heaven (Revelation 21). It appears to me that God must have a future restoration of this earth in mind. When Christ comes again, He will destroy (not annihilate) the present order and remodel the cosmos (2 Peter 3:10ff). Christians look for a new heaven and a new earth. Just as there will be continuity between this body (our earthly tent) and our resurrected body (the new temple), there will be continuity between this earth and the one to come. It is my contention that our hope will be fulfilled in a new heaven and a new earth, not a supposed millennium.

*1 Thessalonians 4:18 "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."*

## **46. THE MEANING OF JUDGMENT DAY**

A central theme of the Second Coming of Christ is judgment, the day of His wrath (Malachi 4:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:1-9; Revelation 6:16). When John the Baptist preached his message of repentance, he warned his generation of the "*wrath to come*" (Matthew 3:7). When he said, "*the ax is laid unto root of the trees*" and "*being cut down*" and "*He will baptize you with fire,*" John was announcing judgment which is a foundational message of both the Old and New Testament.

### **DIFFERENT JUDGMENTS IN THE BIBLE**

***The Final Judgment:*** "*It is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment*" (Hebrews 10:27). Many passages address the judgment of the Eschaton (Daniel 12; Matthew 5:20; 10:15; Luke 10:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9).

***Judgment of sin within history:*** The fall of Adam, Noah's flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues upon Egypt, the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. are Divine, catastrophic judgments within history. Historical judgments are leakages of wrath from the Eschaton.



***Judgment of Christ:*** When Christ was on the cross, the Father “*made him to be sin who knew no sin;*” that is, Christ was punished for our sins at Calvary. Christ’s death was an eschatological judgment. The judgment reserved for the consummation of history was thrust into *the Day of Judgment at Calvary*.

***Judgment of Satan:*** Satan was judged at the cross, and there he experienced a legal, judicial defeat—a defeat planned for the Eschaton (John 12:31; Colossians 2:15).

***Judgment for personal sin:*** John speaks of a “*sin unto death*” (John 5:16). Paul turned sinning believers over to Satan for judgment (1 Corinthians 5). King David experienced God’s judgment for his sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12-18) and for His personal pride (2 Samuel 24). Ananias and Sapphira were judged for defrauding the Lord (Acts 5). Fearing God’s judgment in this life is a valid concern. Paul said that “*wrath*” was leaking from the throne on the wicked before the final judgment within history (Romans 1:18).

***Judgment/Discipline of the believer:*** Every believer will experience the loving but difficult discipline of God—not necessarily for sins, but to improve the character and faith of the believer (Hebrews 12). His discipline is **not** punishment, but child-training -- corrective and ameliorating.

***Judgment of the church:*** Christ is at work purifying His church (Revelation 1-3). 1 Peter 4:17 says, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”

***Judgment at end of history:*** There is a day coming when God’s wrath will destroy this world as we know it and history will breathe its final breath. This is an eschatological judgment—a judgment that awaits the consummation of history (1 Thessalonians 5:1-10; 2 Peter 3:12)

***Judgment of the believer outside of history:*** The believer will be brought before the bema seat of Christ wherein his works will be judged (1 Corinthians 3; 2 Corinthians 5).

***Judgment of the wicked at the Great White Throne:*** On the other side of the veil, John paints a picture of the final judgment wherein all the small and great within history will stand to give an account of their lives to God. This is the final judgment beyond history — the judgment of the Eschaton (Revelation 20:10ff).

## **THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT**

***Revelation 20:11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.***

The great white throne is the same throne that John saw in chapter five. This is a vision of a courtroom. The first adjective describing this throne is the word “*great*” (*mega*). How can one describe the regal, imposing, grandiose authority and power and finality of the throne of God? He simply says “*great*,” used 80 times in Revelation. The fact that it is a white throne shows us that this court is holy, pure, and true—unlike our weak, commercial courts on earth. White represents the glory and majesty of God. “*Him that sat on it*” is not identified, but we assume it is the Lord Jesus Christ (John 5:22; Romans 2:16) -- a reference to the “*Ancient of Days*” working through the Son to render true judgment.

The poetic language, “*from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away,*” states a theological truth that the holy judgment of God is a terrifying encounter for sinful men. In Revelation one, “*His face*” is

described as having eyes of fire—a symbol of intense, incredible perception. Stripped and exposed before the piercing knowledge of pure righteousness, there is no place to hide, no clothes to cover one's nakedness, no cave to crawl into, no forest to camouflage one's presence, no fig leaves to conceal one's most private matters. The earth and the heaven which appear so fixed and permanent will flee in a panic like streakers on the day when God's penetrating holiness is revealed.

This imagery is seen in the sixth seal. The old order must pass away that God might establish a new order. This is not the dissolution of the universe, but the emergence of a new cosmic cast.

***Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.***

This verse assumes the resurrection of all the dead. The small and the great will be examined in this Court. The maid, janitor, and bricklayer will stand before God as well as lawyers, doctors, politicians, senators, and presidents. The antediluvian giants, Nimrod, the Pharaohs, the Caesars, Napoleon, Freud, Huxley, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Russian Czars, Zulu princes, and American presidents, senators, and congressmen will all be there. Evil stepmothers, wicked witches, Medusa, Baba Yaga, hags and harpies, will shutter in terror. Movie stars, actors, bankers, and millionaires will shake with disbelief as the sentence of their fate is announced.

Daniel 7:10 mentions books. By “books” John wants his readers to know that God keeps records on everyone's life with accountant-like accuracy. The One in heaven sees and knows all that we do and say (Psalm 139; Proverbs 15:3). What a terrifying thought! I am so thankful that I have body to hide in where people cannot see my thoughts or feelings. But, on that day the efforts to hide the real us will be met with naked frustration. When an African was asked why he made his idol with his eyes shut and no holes in his ears, he replied, “I did not want my god to see what I did or to hear what I said.” In burlesque, nudes dance behind seven veils, but on that day the all-seeing, all-hearing one will be present—and, there will be no veil to hide shame. All the hocus pocus of a Reno magician will not enable one to escape the terrifying judgment of Almighty God.

*The Book of Life* (zoa) is also opened and it includes the names of all who have believed in Christ (Exodus 32:32; Daniel 12:1; Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 21:27). What a wonderful thought! God's judgment will **not** be arbitrary or capricious, but will be based on the deeds of men (Romans 2:6). Interestingly, no one appears to be saved from judgment as a result of having his record examine.

***Revelation 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.***

The term “gave up the dead” is a term of resurrection. Death is a state. Hell is a place. The sea -- the awesome, turbulent, uncontrollable sea—the place of wonder and mystery will yield to the arm lock of Almighty God. All the sailors on all the ships, including the victims on the Titanic, that have perished at sea will rise from their watery grave and appear before Him who commands the spirits. All regions of earth will surrender their dead and the men will snap to attention when the bailiff in His courtroom says, “All rise!”

.” . . *and they were judged*” are sobering words; “*Judged!*” When the truth-telling God points his finger and announces his accusations, what will we say? What Philadelphia lawyer can defend us? Smith & Wesson are barred from the pleading. Hal & Horton are not licensed to practice law in this courtroom. There is only one Counselor and Advocate and one would do well to meet him now (Isaiah 9:6; 1 John 2:1).

***Revelation 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.***

John sees the final destruction of death, the grave, and the place of the dead. Death and hell are here personified. Fire cannot necessarily be taken literally. Fire appears to be condescending language to describe the final punishment of the wicked. The import of apocalyptic languages informs us that a shocking, ghastly, piercing, sizzling fate awaits the Christ-rejecter.

*The first death* is the soul's separation from the body, *the second death* is the soul's eternal separation from God. All must face the first death, but none who trust in Christ will see the second death. This is the Christian hope.

***Revelation 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.***

Life is a gift of God given to those who confess their shame and flee to Calvary to be washed in the blood of the Lamb (Romans 5:6-8; 6:23). A man's name is written in the Book of Life the minute he trusts Christ as his Savior and Lord (Romans 10:9, 10). Hallelujah!!

If a man does not believe in time, there is no hope for him in eternity. He will be cast alive into the lake of fire like the beast and false prophet toiling to escape towards a non-existent shore (Stockton B. R., 2002 Revised 2010).

### **THE BEMA SEAT OF CHRIST**

#### **Q: What about the judgment of the believer?**

Will he appear at the Great White Throne Judgment? If Jesus bore our sins at Calvary and has forgiven believers of iniquity, then we must conclude that the believer will not be judged in the same way that secular man will be judged. That is, *if Christ died for our sins, how many sins are left for us to pay for?* The answer is “**none**.” There is a judgment for believers, but not for sins! He will not appear before the *Great White Throne Judgment*. But, he will appear before *the Bema Seat of Christ*. Thus, many theologians make a distinction between the Great White Throne Judgment and the Bema Seat of Christ.

**First**, let us understand that God forgives sins on behalf of Christ, but he cannot and does not forgive original sin. All must die.

**Second**, let us understand that we all have an appointment to appear at the eschatological judgment called the “*judgment seat of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 5:10). The word “*seat*” is the Greek word “*bema*” (tou/ bh,matoj tou/ Cristou/). Historically, in the Greco Roman world, the term *bema* referred to the balcony judge's balcony at the Greek Olympiads who awarded the victors with a wreath or crown. We believe, therefore, the judgment seat of Christ is for rewards of service done in His name while on earth. This doctrine is consistent with 1 Corinthians three where Paul discussed a judgment of fire to test each man's work. If works pass the test, “he will receive a reward” (3:14). Bad works will be burnt up; that is, a man will suffer a loss of reward, but not a loss of his position in the kingdom.

**THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT v. THE BEMA SEAT OF CHRIST**

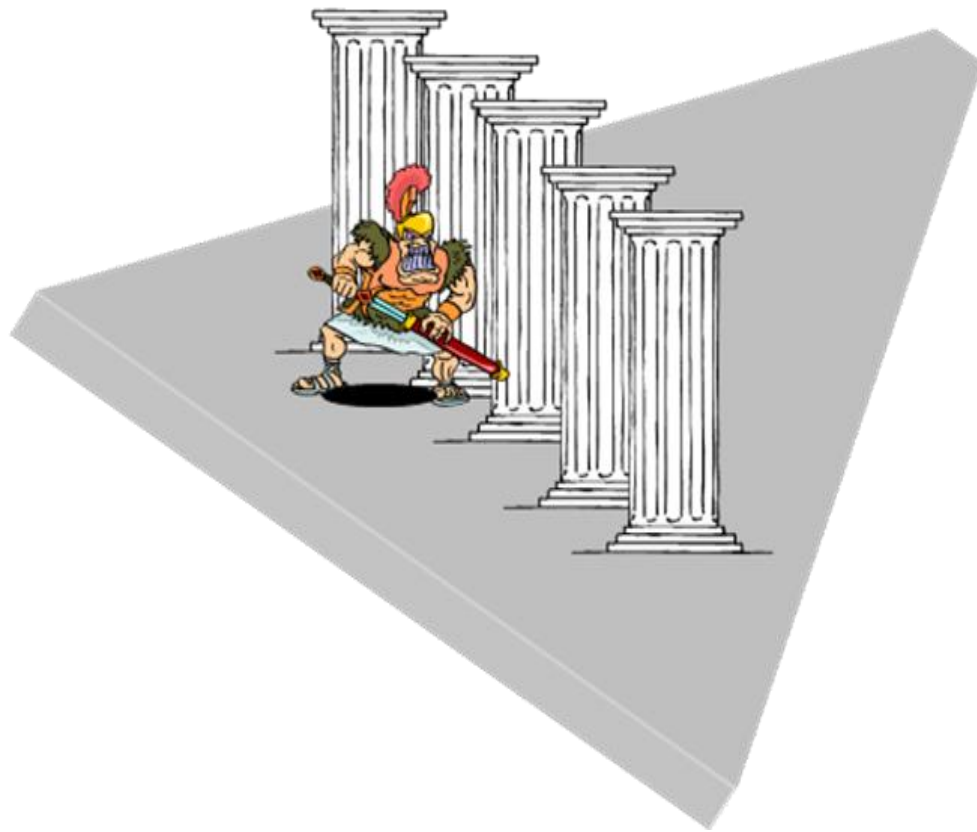
| The Name        | GREAT WHITE THRONE                      | THE BEMA SEAT OF CHRIST             |
|-----------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| The Judge       | God the Creator thru Christ             | Christ the Head of the New Creation |
| The Time        | In eternity                             | In eternity                         |
| The People      | Non-believers                           | Believers                           |
| The Exemption   | No believers present                    | No non-believers present            |
| The Subject     | Works of non-believers                  | Works of the believer               |
| The Purpose     | To expose evil men                      | To expose the good works of men     |
| The Nature      | Punishment of unbelievers for rebellion | Reward Christians for their service |
| The Verdict     | All will be condemned                   | Many will be rewarded               |
| The Final State | Death in the Lake of Fire               | Life in the kingdom of God          |

**THE FIVE REWARDS POSSIBLE FOR BELIEVERS**

- **The crown of life** (James 1:12; Revelation 2:12): This is often called the martyrs crown. There are two ways to obtain this crown. One is to die for Christ. The other is to live for Christ. Both involve death to self-love; to self-interest; to selfish pursuits. It is just as hard to live for Christ as it is to die for Christ.
- **The crown of righteousness** (1 Timothy 4:8): This crown is given to those who love His appearing; who long for Christ to appear and establish His kingdom on earth.
- **The incorruptible crown** (1 Corinthians 9:24): Given to those who serve God with temperance and persistence in this life. Most believers don't mind dying for Christ, they just don't want to give up their stuff for Him. Because too many Christians do not deny anything for the sake of the gospel, there is a special reward for those who give up life's pleasures to further the work of evangelism.
- **The crown of rejoicing** (Philippians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:19): This is soul winner's crown.

- **The crown of glory** (1 Peter 5:4): This is the shepherds crown for being a good steward of the Word of God, the Gospel, and for caring for the flock. Because there is no glory on earth for pastors, those who serve well will receive a crown of glory.

## **PILLAR FOUR: THE EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S HISTORY ON THE BELIEVER**



## 47. THE BLESSING OF SALVATION

The New Testament begins with the wonderful announcement that Jesus “shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Matthew follows the declaration of Malachi which proclaims “the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts . . .” (Malachi 4:1). Underlying the wonder of salvation is the sobering Biblical fact of judgment, death, hell, and eternal suffering.

## 48. THE BLESSING OF SALVATION FROM HELL

The good news of the gospel is that Christ saves sinners *from hell*. The subject of hell has inspired painters and artists as well as theologians. It has fueled the flames of some of the world's hottest sermons and at the same time chilled the hearts of secular men? Who can grasp eternal suffering or even entertain the thought of a soul burning in fiery flames forever? Our finite minds are troubled by just the thought of endless suffering. Either we must change the callous way we live or dump cold water on the subject. If hell is real, what kind of men are we if we don't share the gospel with every person we know?

### WORDS OF HELL

**Sheol:** In the OT this refers to “the dead” or “the grave” and “the place of the dead.”

**Gehenna:** This is the most common word used in the NT for “hell” and struck fear into the hearts of Biblical people. The Valley of Ben-Hinnom (Ghenna) is the place Ahaz burnt his children to Baal. Gehenna is used to refer to the place of punishment of the wicked (2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chronicles 28:1-5). It is used twelve times in the NT (Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28, 18:9, 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6).

**Hades:** In Hellenistic literature “hades” was equivalent to “death” or “the grave” or “the tomb” and the world of the dead. Metaphorically, it means the grave. It is never used for a place of punishment. It is used ten times in Scripture (Matthew 11:23, 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27; 1 Corinthians 15:55; Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14).

**Tartaros:** This is a portion of the underworld where the gods punished those who offended them. It is associated with fire and eternal torment of fallen angels. This word is used only once in the NT (2 Peter 2:4).

**Bosom of Abraham** (Luke 16:23): From this account, we learn there are two parts to hades: one a place of suffering and torment for unbelievers; the other a place of comfort for true sons of Abraham.

### JUDGMENT DAY

*Matthew 12:36 I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak,*

*Hebrews 9:27 And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,*

*Romans 14:10-12 - But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*

*1 Corinthians 4:5 - Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.*

*Matthew 10:15 - Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.*

*Matthew 23:33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell (th/j kri,sewj th/j gee,nnhj)?*

*Jude 1:15 - To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard (speeches) which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*

*1 John 4:17 - Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.*

*John 12:48 - He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*

## **GEHENNA AND SUFFERING**

The Bible not only teaches there is a judgment, but that there is eternal punishment. The orthodox position that there is an eternal state where sinners are punished for rejecting Christ is sustained by the following texts:

*Matthew 5:22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire (ge,ennan tou/ puro,j).*

*Matthew 5:30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell (ge,ennan).*

*Matthew 10:28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell (gee,nnh|).*

*Matthew 25:46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment"<sup>28</sup> (ko,lasin aivw,nion), but the righteous to eternal life (zwh.n aivw,nion)."*

*Matthew 10:28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell (yuch.n kai. sw/ma avpole,sai evn gee,nnh|Å).*

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<sup>28</sup> The word "punishment" (kolasin) means "to mutilate" or "to prune." The adjective "eternal" is also used in reference to eternal "life" (zoen). So there is no reason not to suppose that punishment is no not coeval with life. The word "eternal" (aiones) means without beginning or end or both (Robertson).



*Matthew 13:42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace (th.n ka,minon tou/ puro,j\), where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

*Matthew 13:50 and throw them into the fiery furnace, (eivj th.n ka,minon tou/ puro,j\) where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

*Matthew 25:41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (to. pu/r to. aivw,nion to. h`toimasme,non tw/| diabo,lw| kai. toi/j avgge,loij aurtou/).*

*2 Thessalonians 1:9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power (oi(tinej di,khn ti,sousin o;leqron aivw,nion avpo. prosw,pou tou/ kuri,ou kai. avpo. th/j do,xhj th/j ivscu,oj aurtou/) (YLT: who shall suffer justice -- destruction age-during -- from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of his strength).*

*Jude 1:7 In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire (puro.j aivwni,ou di,khn u`pe,cousai) (YLT: fire age-during, justice suffering).*

*Revelation 14:11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.*

*Revelation 19:20 But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur (eivj th.n li,mnhn tou/ puro.j th/j kaiome,nhj evn qei,w|)(YLT: to the lake of the fire, that is burning with brimstone;).*

*Revelation 20:13-14 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire (eivj th.n li,mnhn tou/ puro,jÅ). The lake of fire is the second death (o` qa,natoj o` deu,tero,j evstin( h` li,mnh tou/ puro,jÅ).*

*Revelation 21:8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars -- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death (th/| li,mnh| th/| kaiome,nh| puri. kai. qei,w|)( o( evstin o` qa,natoj o` deu,teroj) (YLT: in the lake that is burning with fire and brimstone, which is a second death).*

*Mark 9:48 where their worm (o` skw,lhx) does not die and the fire is not quenched (o(pou o` skw,lhx aurtw/n ouv teleuta/|<sup>29</sup> kai. to. pu/r ouv sbe,nnutai<sup>30</sup>).*

<sup>29</sup> The Greek verb “teleutao” is present active, 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular which “to be put to death.” It is preceded by a negation.

<sup>30</sup> The Greek word “sbennumi” means “to quench, to suppress, or stifle.” It is preceded by a negation; that is, the fire never goes out.

*Matthew 7:13 "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many."*

How can an Eternal Spirit communicate the fact of eternal suffering to His creatures? Without a doubt, He condescends to man and uses language which express suffering. If language means anything, use of the terms "hell," and "fire," and "burning," and "smoke," and "lake of fire" and "burning sulfur" suggest torment. Words like "wailing and gnashing of teeth" convey conscious torment. Words like "eternal," "forever," "not quenched" and "dies not" disclose eternal consciousness of torment. Does an earthly fire inflict pain on a spirit? Probably not! God uses the term "fire" because it imprints on the imagination of men that there is an eternal punishment analogous to that of being burned. Our Lord does not attempt to scare men out of hell or into heaven. He communicates the fact of eternal punishment in terms we can grasp. And, He does it without morbidity or macabre commentary.

### **THE DOCTRINE OF ANNIHILATION**

This is the absurd, unorthodox doctrine that denies the existence of a place of eternal suffering and torment. Holders of this position believe that judgment of the wicked results not in torment but eternal non-existence. In this view, God will simply snuff out the life of the wicked much like one extinguishes the light on a candle. This belief is held by the Watchtower Society, John Stott, Clark Pinnock, and many others.

This position seems to revolve around three propositions: 1) Theological arguments: God is too loving and kind to punish anyone forever; that is, eternal punishment is inconsistent with God's love; 2) linguistic arguments; that is, words used to describe hell and fire and judgment can easily support annihilationism; e.g., annihilationists believe the word "eternal" refers to the effect of "unending" death and not time or duration of the assignment; and, 3) exegetical arguments in the context of words referring to hell and torment better indicate death and destruction in terms of the annihilation argument.

The annihilationist makes the mistake of requiring God's Word to conform to the mind of man, instead of requiring the imperfect mind of man to adjust to the perfect Word of God.

When Christ speaks of hell in Mark 9:43, He uses the Greek word "Gehenna" meaning the "valley of Hinnom." The valley of Hinnom was located somewhere west of the City of Jerusalem. This is where idolatrous Israelites sacrificed their children to Moloch (Jeremiah 32:35), which, on this account, was afterward regarded as a place of abomination, and made a receptacle for all the refuse of the city, perpetual fires being kept up in order to prevent the spread of disease. In the New Testament the name is transferred, by an easy metaphor, to Hell and further builds on this metaphorical language of the valley of Hinnom in Revelation 20:10, 14, 15; and 21:8. The passage in Mark 9:43 shuts the door on the erroneous doctrine of annihilationism: "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

Preachers are supposed to tell the truth because the Scripture says, "*Thou shall not bear false testimony*" (Exodus 20:16). The problem with always telling the truth is that people have difficulty facing pure truth. Pure truth is like gazing at the noonday Sun. It blinds the eye and blisters the skin. Do you remember when YHWH's voice thundered on that holy mountain? As lightening cracked and smoke billowed upward, God discharged the Ten Commandments. Trembling, the people begged Moses to disengage the roar of God's holiness. We are not allowed to look at blazing truth, but we are allowed to see the shadows truth casts.

## **THE CRY FROM HELL**

The Lord Jesus Christ walked us through the shadows of eternity when he told the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. At a distance we see the truth about eternity. There, we hear a cry from the pit of hell that echoes through time and eternity. If you can hear this cry today, you will be an effective servant for Christ tomorrow.

The story is about two men, one a believer, and the other an unbeliever. This is a true story. It is not a parable. Jesus never used real names in any of his parables. This account was not told to the disciples, but to the Pharisees for the disciples. The Pharisees loved money and sneered at Jesus' radical view of money management. Because these religious hypocrites were covetous and destined for darkness, Jesus told them a true account of a rich man who was justified before men but condemned by God (Luke 16:17ff).

## **THE PAUPER**

I introduce to you, the pauper, an impoverished saint—an outcast from society who was dressed in the sweat-soaked, soil-stained rags of a beggar. Hungry and sick, a putrefied smell emitted from the open sores on his body. Defenseless, he could not even prevent the dogs from licking his ulcerated sores.

Jesus said the pauper's name was "*Lazarus*". The Good Shepherd knows His sheep, and the believing beggar was no exception. Though he was forgotten by men, he was known by God. It does not matter if we are known on earth. What matters is if we are known in heaven. If our name is written above, that is sufficient (John 10:27).

Lazarus died. Most men fear death, but for poor Lazarus, death was the key that released him from his prison of suffering. The Heavenly Father sent a royal escort to welcome him into the kingdom of everlasting happiness.

## **THE RICH MAN**

I introduce to you the rich man -- the hedonistic materialist who luxuriated himself on couches of pleasure. No doubt he was the envy of men. He had it all: health, wealth, friends, family, food, possessions, fame, and respect. And, he had it every day! We do not know his name. The Bible says, "The name of the wicked shall rot" (Proverbs 10:7).

The rich man also died. If you want to know how much of his material wealth he left behind, the answer is "all of it!"

The Bible says that he went to Hades. Unlike Lazarus, there was no welcome, no escort, and no celebration — just deafening silence to his unanswered screams. What Lazarus was on earth, the rich man was in hell, and what the rich man was on earth, Lazarus was more so in the bosom of Abraham.

We are not told why the rich man went to hell. No specific sin is mentioned. It was not what he did that ordained his station in perdition, but what he did not do. He had been very religious, but religion did not save him. He made many friends on earth, but he failed to make a Friend in heaven. He finally believed, but it was too late.

## **FACTS ABOUT HELL**

The word "hell" is the Greek word "Hades." Hades is the abode of the dead, and it is equivalent to the Hebrew word "sheol." It is not the final resting place for saint or sinner, but it appears to be the station of departed spirits until the Final Judgment.

Take a glimpse at a scene in the pre-cross underworld. We glean the following facts about that horrible place.

**Hell is a real place in the spirit world:** *"And in hell he lifted up his eyes"* (Luke 16:23). Hades is not a figure of speech. It appears to be a real tangible realm of conscious existence. Men can see, hear, feel, and touch.

**Hell has two spheres:** One sphere is a resting place for God's children, and the other is a place of torments for Christ-rejecters. There are no "unbelievers" in hell. These two realms are separated by a "gulf fixed," an indomitable barrier that prevents transportation between the two.

**Hell is a place of torments:** *"In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments."* The word "torments" is plural indicating the multiplicity of the suffering. The agent of this suffering is "fire" (16:24). Words fail to describe the excoriating pain that fire wreaks on the body. Whether burns are electrical, chemical, or thermal, they hurt! Burns are related in seriousness according to how many layers of tissue are damaged. The loss of tissue and fluids combined with the blistering and swelling sizzle nerve endings. Because of modern medicine, many victims can gain relief from burn trauma. In hell, however, there are no hospitals. There is no relief from the eternal fire: *"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment"* (Matthew 25:46).

**Hell is a place of sensory perception.** Note how all **five senses** are mentioned while describing the suffering of the rich man.

- He could see: "He looked and saw."
- He could speak: "So he called to Him."
- He could feel: "I am in agony."
- He could taste: "Cool my tongue."
- He could hear: "Abraham said (to him)."

**Hell is a place of unfulfilled desires.** As a jockey beats his horse towards the finish line, every second of every millennium the man in hell will feel the flaming whip of hell's fire. There is no comfort in hell, no mercy in hell, and no pleasure in hell. There is absolutely nothing in hell but pain. There is nothing to plan, nothing to do, and nothing to hear. There is no one to talk with, no place to go, and no way to escape the agony. Every desire will be frustrated.

**Hell is a place of unanswered prayer:** *"Have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue."* The rich man prayed, but to no avail! There are no answers to the screams in hell—no miracles, no wonders, and no deliverance.

**Hell is a place with impeccable memory:** *"Abraham said, Son, remember that . . ."* The rich man could remember Lazarus, Abraham, Moses, the prophets, and his father's house. He could remember his purple

robes, his money, and his luxury. He could remember all the sermons, all the scriptures, and all the opportunities he had to repent.

**Hell is a place of desperate loneliness.** He saw Abraham and Lazarus, but there is no mention of another soul in hell. His friends were not seen. A strange force prevents any association with others. For ever and ever and ever he will suffer alone, alone, and alone.

**Hell is a place of realized fears:** ". . . lest they also come into this place of torment . . ." Not only did his own existence quiver with reality, but he feared that his brothers who looked to him as the model man would follow him and suffer the same fate.

The rich man understands the needs of missions better than most when he said, "*Send Lazarus (someone) to my father's house . . . to warn them*" (16:27). The cry from hell was "*Send someone to warn them.*"

### A REFLECTION FOR CHRISTIANS

Do you have 20-20 spiritual vision? Do you believe hell is a real place with real suffering? If you had the cure for cancer, would you keep it locked in your medicine cabinet? You may not have the cure for cancer, but you do have the cure for souls. If you are a Christian, what kind of Christian are you if you do not share God's salvation with people on their way to hell? The cry from hell is "*Send someone to warn them.*" If a Christian has any spiritual vision, should he not muster all his energy and all his resources to heed the cry from hell?

Jesus said to his disciples, "*Go . . . and make disciples of all nations . . .*" (Matthew 28:19, 20). Will you heed the call? Will you give your time, talent, and tender to the Great Commission?

### A REFLECTION FOR BELIEVERS

**Hell has no escape:** "*Nor can anyone cross over here to us.*" There are many roads to hell, but only one way to heaven. It is easy to step into hell, but it is impossible to step out. The traffic only goes one way.

**How long is eternity?** Imagine there is a mountain of stone in the Pacific that is one mile wide, one mile long, and one mile high. Once every thousand years a bird comes to sharpen its beak on that stone. When that stone is totally worn away, one day in eternity has passed.

**How can a loving God send someone to that awful place?** A better question might be, "How can a holy and just God fail to punish sin?" Remember, the sun does not shine for you. The grass does not grow for you. The air you breathe and the food you eat was not given to you so you could spend your short life serving your pleasures. He made you to know Him and to serve Him. Why should He not judge the one who spends his life gorging on his lust? Hell is the just dessert for all that ignore his Son and neglect His law.

Back in the 1940s two men boarded a two-engine airplane that took off from New York to fly to England. The new stewardess came to the first and asked if he would like to wear a parachute. She told him it might make him feel better during the trip. She tried a second approach with the second man: "This plane might go down over the Atlantic," she said. "Would you like to wear a parachute?" Which of the two men took the parachute? The first man took the pack, but removed it later because it was uncomfortable. The second man took the parachute and wore the parachute during the eight hour trip.

The lesson is this: You don't need Jesus to make you feel better during your trip in this life. You need Jesus because you are going to have to jump from the airplane!! "*It is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment*" or is that jumpment? You will have to jump. Without Jesus you will land in hell. This is pure blistering truth. It is difficult to gaze at pure truth, isn't it?

No one has to go to hell. There is an escape and that is through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ! "He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

*John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

### **THE RAPTURE OF THE WICKED**

*Matthew 13:30 "Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them"*

The word "*rapture*" is not used in the Bible just like the word "*trinity*" is not found in Scripture. But, the concept is there.

The word "*rapture*" is a theological construct originating with Darby and Scofield taken from 1 Thessalonian 4:17.

***1 Thessalonians 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up (harpazo) together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.***

The word "*caught up*" is a translation of the Greek word *harpazo* which means "to catch up," "to seize," or "to gather." The Latin Vulgate translates the Greek *ἀρπαγησόμεθα* as *rapiemur* meaning "we will be caught up" or "we will be taken away" from the Latin verb *rapio* meaning "to catch up" or "take away".

It is translated in Matthew 11:12 to "*take by force*" and in Matthew 12:29 as "*spoil*." In both cases the word *harpazo* means "to lay hold off, plunder, seize."

*Matthew 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force (harpazo)*

*Matthew 12:29 Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil (harpazo) his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.*

The modern dispensational theory of the rapture began with a woman named Margaret McDonald, a self styled prophetess. She shared it with a roman Catholic priest and eventually was picked up by John Nelson Darby and popularized by C.I. Scofield . . . and Dallas Theological Seminary.

After Darby and Scofield, theologians referred to this "*seizing*" as "*the rapture*" which developed a meaning all to its own -- a catching away of believers into the sky never to see earth again. Thus, dispensationals seized the word "*harpazo*" and developed it into an eschatological doctrine never intended by its usage in 1 Thessalonians 4. [Yes, the Lord will come and gather His people to himself.]

The great hope of believers is **not** "pie in the sky when we die" or "a rocket thrust into the arms of Jesus" or "sitting on a cloud plucking harps and singing 'Kumbaya', my Lord . . ." but, that the meek shall inherit the earth (Psalm 37:11; Mathew 5:5).

So, if we take the word "*harpazo*" and free it from its modern theological construct, we can investigate the rapture (seizing) of the wicked for judgment. Consider the following texts:

Note how the wicked are caught and taken to judgment in Psalm 37:

*Psalm 37:17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.*

*Psalm 37:20 But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.*

*Psalm 37:28 For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.*

Here the seed of the wicked are seized and killed -- abortion comes to mind.

*Psalm 37:34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.*

Note how the Lord arrests and judges (seizes, raptures) the wicked in these texts:

*Psalm 58:10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.*

*Psalm 68:2 As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish (vanish) at the presence of God.*

*Psalm 129:4 The LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.*

*Psalm 145:20 The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy.*

*Proverbs 10:30 The righteous shall never be removed (from the earth): but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.*

The earth is for the righteous, not the wicked; earth, not heaven is the destiny of the righteous.

*Proverbs 11:31 Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.*

Note the rapture of the Wicked in Matthew 8:12

*Matthew 8:12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

The "*children of the kingdom*" refers to false Jews with a nominal knowledge of God kingdom.

"*cast out*" (*ekballo*) means to be "driven out, cast out, with a notion of violence . . . expelled" - this text demonstrates how the wicked will be seized by force and banished from the kingdom -- the rapture of the wicked to experience "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Note the rapture of the wicked in Matthew 13.

***Matthew 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.***

"Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them" refers to the rapture or seizing of the wicked for judgment. The Greek word for "gather" (*sunauxano*) means "to collect, seize, or collect."

"*but gather the wheat into my barn*" refers to the rapture of the saints or the gathering of believers into his barn -- a metaphor for the kingdom of God or life on earth without the wicked.

Note the *rapture* of the wicked in Matthew 24.

*38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,*

*39 And knew not until the flood came, and took (seize, lift up, elevate) them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

*40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken (taken up to judgment), and the other left.*

*41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one taken up to judgment, and the other left.*

Notice that in Noah's day the wicked were taken to judgment to die in the flood, and that Noah was lifted up on the waters and then returned to a new heavens and a new earth totally different than the preflood terrarium environment to carry out God's will.

Matthew 24 is our Lord's prediction about the destruction of Jerusalem and not one block on the temple to be left standing -- an event which happened in 70 A.D. Here the Lord address two men; *one taken, the other left*.

Who is the one taken? Answer: *the one taken is the wicked*. He is taken away to judgment just like the wicked in Noah's day. We call this the rapture of the wicked.

The rapture of the wicked is alluded to in Luke 13.

*27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.*

*28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.*

The verb "*depart*" (*aphistemi*) is an aorist imperative -- a judicial sentence by the "*Master of the house*" whereby the wicked are taken by force and thrust out of the kingdom to experience weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**Note the rapture of the wicked in John 5:29** -- "And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

The word "*resurrection*" is a sister term for rapture. It means "to raise up;" i.e., God will raise the unbelieving dead by force to experience everlasting damnation.



**Note the rapture of the wicked in 1 Thessalonian 5:** *"the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night"* to seize the wicked and to execute them.

Note how the rapture of the wicked is alluded to in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9

*7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,*

*8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:*

*9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;*

*2 Thessalonians 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:*

Paul addresses what will happen to the wicked first; that is, the Second Coming of Christ is about our Lord coming to rapture the wicked and to punish them . . . and to punish the lawless one(s) with the brightness of His coming. In chapter two verse one Paul mentions the believers being gathered unto Him.

Note the rapture of the wicked in Revelation 20: "the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" . . . "there was found no place for them" on earth, and "and they were judged every man according to their works . . . And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire." This is the seizing of the wicked so the righteous can inherit the new heavens and the new earth.

The Scripture promotes multiple dualities: two roads, two foundation -- rock and sand, two kingdoms, two kinds of people - wheat and tares, and two destinies - saved and lost.

The next two great events in history are salvation for the righteous and a judgment of wrath for the wicked; or, the gathers of the saints into the kingdom of God, and the rapture of the wicked for judgment.

## **49. THE BLESSING OF THE NEW COVENANT**

*Hebrews 8:8 . . . Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:*

### **A COVENANT DEFINED**

Our glorious gospel comes to us in a genre of Scripture known as the New Testament. We are aware that there is one Bible, not two; and, that it is separated into two sections: the first is called "the Old Testament" and second is called "The New Testament." The word "testament" can refer to a "testimony" or an "arrangement" or a "covenant." The New Testament is called the "New Covenant." But, what is a covenant?

**A covenant is a contract.** All of life is about contracts: marriages contracts; court contract; business contracts. Social security is a contract. You bank account is under contract. The house you live in was

obtained by contract. We make contracts every day for lunch or coffee or business. If you have a job, you are involved in a contract. When a police officer writes you a ticket he is asking you to contract with him to appear in court. When countries make contracts with other nations we call them "International Treaties" or "Alliances" or a "Social Compact." Contracts are advantageous and provide mutual benefits or we would not make them; that is, it is a tremendous advantage to have a contract with someone. Commerce operates through contracts.

However, **when God is a party of a contract we call the contract a "covenant!"** There are many covenants in Scripture in which God was part of the contract. There is an Adamic Covenant, a Noahic Covenant, an Abrahamic Covenant, the Sinaitic Covenant, and the New Covenant. And, it is an advantage to be in contract with God.

### **ELEMENTS OF A CONTRACT**

For contracts to be binding and enforceable they must contain the following elements.

**Competent Parties:** There are at least two parties to a contract, each of which seeks one or more obligations from the other. The parties must be mature and competent to contract and have the capacity to fulfill obligations. In Biblical covenants, God is One Party and a man or nation is the other party. Terms like "grantor," or "obligator" or "oblige" or "beneficiary," "assignor" or "assignee" describe a party's standing in the contract.

**Offer and Acceptance:** A contract involves an offer of one party to the other; e.g., I will mow your lawn for twenty dollars. The offer must be accepted. It may be accepted or rejected or negotiated in term of a counteroffer. Acceptance must be at least verbal and in many cases accepted by signature. Some contracts involve an oath like when a person makes a jurat or obtains the services of a notary. Oaths make contracts more binding and legally enforceable. A unilateral contract is where one person binds himself to an obligation wherein the first party is assumed to have some kind of duty but never signs the contract. Credit cards and bank loans and IRS forms are of the nature (Yikes!). In Biblical covenants, God

**Mutual Consideration:** In order for a contract to be valid and enforceable, the parties must exchange something of value. In the case of a sale of an automobile, the buyer receives the car and the seller receives the money. In some Biblical contracts an animal was offered as consideration or blood spilt as a token of the seriousness of the offer or acceptance of the duties of the contract. Down payments and earnest money are consideration. No consideration. No contract.

**Performance or Duties:** Contracts contain offers and obligations, rights and duties. In order for a contract to be enforceable, actions demanded or requested in a contract must be performed. The seller of a car is under no obligation to hand over the keys until the buyer hands over the money to the seller.

### **BREACH OF CONTRACT**

In order for a contract to be enforceable, the duties of the contract must be performed. One cannot receive the benefit of the contract unless each party performs their duty. But, a party is relieved performance if the other party fails to perform his duties or his part of the obligation. Thus, we have the unfolding drama of Biblical covenants because men did not perform their duties under Biblical covenants. And, it is this breach of duty which demanded a New Covenant.

In the Old Covenant, God was one Party and the Nation of Israel the other party. God promised to bless the nation if they obeyed. We see the blessings and curses of the covenant in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28ff. Israel breached the contract. Willfully neglected her duty under the covenant. God, then kept His promise and the nation was cursed. Israel, typical of the faults of all men, because of her disobedience did not receive the benefits of the Old Covenant; rather, Israel received the curses of the covenant. In fact, the last word in the Old Testament is the word “curse.”

But, Malachi anticipates the arrival of the “Mediator of the Covenant,” “Sun of righteousness” who will arise “with healing in his wings” (Malachi 3:1; 4:2). The OT contained the promise of a new covenant—a covenant that contained provisions for the weaknesses of men and the inability of man to fulfill duties under a covenant with their Creator (Jeremiah 31:31ff). Thus, the New Testament is all about a new covenant with benefits and duties quite different from the Old Covenant. It is good news that God offers man blessings under a new contract—blessings including but superior to those offered under the contract at Sinai—a contract which resulted in death to the nation (2 Corinthians 3:7).

### **THE NEW COVENANT**

***ESV Hebrews 9:15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.***

The God of Israel anticipated His people would breach the Sinaitic Contract. In anticipation of these breaches, the LORD God, as soon as he laid down the duties of the contract in Exodus 10-24, immediately established the tabernacle and the Levitical system to provide a way for lawbreakers to renew their relationship to God and His covenant. We learn in the Book of Hebrews that the entire Levitical system was a shadow, a type of the greater covenant, the greater temple, the greater sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Synoptic Gospels close with Christ announcing His consideration (His blood) as the basis of a new covenant between God and man—a covenant that makes provisions for man's breach of contract with God; that is, His blood cleanses “sins”. Further, the NT speaks often about the Abrahamic Covenant and the arrival of the Promised Seed in history which makes a new covenant possible (Galatians 3:6-14; Hebrews 8-10).

Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant, the High Priest, going into the Heavenly Temple to offer His blood upon the Heavenly Altar to obtain eternal redemption for those He Represents; that is, to perfect the standing and conscience of the elect of God (See the Book of Hebrews). Without Christ as one's Mediator, how can sinful man make any claim upon God? is good news, therefore, that Christ is the sinner's Representative / Mediator to a holy God.

### **CHRIST, THE MEDIATOR OF A NEW COVENANT**

*“And I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations” (Isaiah 42:6).*

*“And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel,” (Hebrews 12:24).*

*“He is the mediator of the new testament,” (Hebrews 9:15).*

*“What God promised to the fathers, this He **has fulfilled** to us their children by raising Jesus from (from the dead)” (Acts 13, 32, 33).*

*“For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.” (2 Corinthians 1:20).*

The blessings of God were conditioned upon Israel's obedience (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 28:1-2; Isaiah 1:19; Psalm 106:3). At Sinai, Israel pledged obedience to the duties and obligations of the Covenant (Exodus 19:8). But, Israel failed to uphold their end of the agreement and God was under no duty to provide blessings to the disobedient nation. Thus, the history of Israel is about the nation's breach of contract and God's judgment on the nation for their disobedience.

But God in His grace had a plan—a New Covenant based on the obedience of His Son to God's Law-word.

*Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, **born under the law**,*

Unlike Israel who disobeyed God in their time of testing, Christ obeyed the law. He obeyed God's law on Israel's behalf. Because He performed His duties to the contract, He was, as a man, able to obtain the blessings of the Old Covenant. In his **life**, He was Israel's Representative and fulfilled Israel's covenant responsibilities to God (Romans 5:20).

*Romans 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

In His **death**, He removed the curse of covenant breaking by becoming a curse for them; that is, He volunteered to represent them and to take the curse they deserved upon Himself (Galatians 3:1-14).

*Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*

In His **resurrection**, Christ received the blessings of the covenant which were rightly His by virtue of His obedient life (Ephesians 1:3).

In His **glorification**, all believers, Jews and Gentiles, share in all the glory and blessing of His covenant accomplishments (Romans 8:28-32).

Not only is Christ *Israel's Representative and means of obeying God's law for them*; **He is God's Representative (Mediator)**, the means or locus of covenant blessings promised to Israel by God if they trust Him. When God entered into a contract with Israel, he promised to do certain thing for them. Israel promised to do certain things for God. Because Israel did not fulfill its part of the contract, God could not ethically give them the blessings of the covenant. Disobedient to the covenant, God was obligated to judge the nation. But, God in His kindness sent Jesus to be the “messenger of the covenant” (Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 42:6); that is, His mediator and means by which He (God) could righteously extend the blessings of the covenant to the faithful within the nation.

**First**, God poured out the curses of the covenant on Christ (Deuteronomy 28:15), and took for Israel upon Himself what Israel could not take for itself. **Christ was God's Representative Choice to be punished for Israel.**

He became Israel's Representative to be punished in the place of Israel. At Calvary He received the curse and "became sin for us" as symbolized by the brass serpent lifted up in the wilderness (John 3:14; Galatians 4:13; Romans 11:26, 27).

**Second**, Christ obeyed the Father. Because **He fulfilled Israel's responsibilities to God** on behalf of Israel, Christ became the means by which God could bless believing Israel (Romans 5:20).

*"Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:8).*

He did for Israel on behalf of Israel what Israel could not do for itself. He was obedient unto death (Philippians 2:8). He finished the work God gave Him to do (John 17:4). God was able to complete His part of the contract because Christ performed the duties of the contract (Hebrews 9:15). Christ was God's Mediator or means of fulfilling His word to Israel (Luke 2:25, 32, 34). As Israel's representative **He obeyed the law for them**; as God's Representative. Likewise, He became the means by which God could bestow the blessing of the covenant to Israel (Galatians 4:5, 6).

In Christ's life as their Representative, Israel kept all the statutes of the law. In His death as Israel's Representative, Israel bore all the curses of the law. In resurrection, it became possible for the ecclesia (called out ones from Israel) to receive all the blessings of the covenant.

**But, the New Covenant makes demands upon men in order to obtain covenant riches.** God offers men forgiveness and eternal life and a place in His kingdom if they will recognize what He has done for them through His Mediator, and accept His the new contract. Blessing of the kingdom of God are offered to men, but they must *believe the offer, accept the offer, commit to the offer, and decide to accept the offer.*

In believing in Christ, true Jews accept Him as their Representative before God and as God's Representative to them. False Jews did not believe and are named part of *the synagogue of Satan* (Revelation 2:9, 3:9). Confessing Christ, Jews become members of spiritual Israel (**True Israel or the New Israel** which is composed of Christ and the community of the redeemed -- Romans 9:6).

For this reason Acts 13:32 says, *"What God promised to the fathers, this He has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus from the dead."* Likewise, the blessings of this contract are offered to Gentiles on the same basis as that of the Hebrews.

### **CONTRACT OFFER AND ACCEPTANCE DEMANDED**

*Matthew 3:2 And saying, Repent ye {duty}: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (the offer).*

*Romans 10:9 if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead (duty), you will be saved (offer).*

*Matthew 11:28-29 Come unto me (duty of the contract), all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (the offer in contract). Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me (duty and acceptance), for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls (offer).*

*John 1:11-12 He came unto his own, and his own received him not (they rejected the contract). But to all who did receive him (accepted the contract), who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (offer and blessings of the contract).*

What most people fail to understand is that every promise, every hope, every dream created by the promises of God were realized in and through the resurrection of Christ because God made Him to be a **Covenant for the people** (Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 42:6).

The good news of the New Testament is that God has created a New Covenant and is extending an offer to men to participate in *all kingdom blessings* in and through His Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. And, there is only *one Mediator between man God* (1 Timothy 2:5).

*Hebrews 12:24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*

## 50. THE BLESSING OF JUSTIFICATION



Better things are now here. The major message of the New Testament is the gospel. We have seen that the gospel is about the kingdom of God entering history in and through the Christ to defeat man's enemies.

The third pillar of the gospel is the good news about Christ's history and the special meaning of His life, death, and resurrection.

The fourth pillar of the gospel is that it is good news His death showers the believer with wonderful benefits.

This section is about the effects of Christ's history on those of faith.

The gospel of Christ flows directly out of Gospel the kingdom of God. Though the kingdom is an eschatological event, the King and His powers were present on earth to deliver men from the bondage of darkness. The King brought believing men under the "spiritual" blessing of His kingdom in advance of its full appearance on earth. In a limited but significant way, believers enjoy now kingdom blessings in advance of the dynamic intervention of the kingdom of God at the consummation of history.

*Justification* is an **eschatological judicial verdict** associated with the Day of Judgment in the Eschaton. It is one of four main blessings proclaimed (the kerygma) by the apostles (Acts 13:39). The other three are *forgiveness* (Acts 5:39), *eternal life* (Acts 13:48), and the gift of *the Holy Spirit* (Acts 2:38).

### MARTIN LUTHER AND JUSTIFICATION

Luther's story is well known. Passionate, impetuous, demanding, sensitive, and pessimistic in temperament, Luther struggled to find peace with God. He could not overcome his sense of guilt despite all his good works, prayers, penances, and alms. His confessor advised him to read Romans. No more historically momentous advice was ever given by a confessor.

In Romans, Luther discovered the simple but Herculean truth that God had not only forgiven his sins freely, but justified him -- not because of Luther's goodness but because of Christ's good work at Calvary. That discovery freed Luther's spirit and ignited a fire that swept over the dry timbers of Europe.

The monolith of the Reformation became Saint Paul's summary of the gospel: "*The just (justified, saved) shall live (have eternal life) by faith (in Christ)*" (Romans 1: 17).

### **IMPORTANCE OF JUSTIFICATION**

Luther said that darkness and ignorance of God stem from a failure to grasp the truth of justification by faith. "*This article, how we are saved, is the chief of the whole Christian doctrine, to which all divine disputations must be directed*" (305) (Luther).

**The Augsburg Confession** calls justification "*the chief article of the Gospel.*" (Augsburg Confession, Article XXVII, 52, 1921).

Likewise, **Melanchthon's famous apology of the Augsburg Confession** calls justification "*the chief topic of Christian doctrine*" (Melanchthon, 1921). Calvin also called justification the "*main hinge on which religion turns.*" (Calvin, 1536; 1936)

The Formula of Concord states (1577):

*This article concerning justification by faith (as the Apology says) is the chief article in the entire Christian doctrine, without which no poor conscience can have any firm consolation, or can truly know the riches of the grace of Christ, as Dr. Luther also has written: If this only article remains pure on the battlefield, the Christian Church also remains pure, and in goodly harmony and without any sects; but if it does not remain pure, it is not possible that any error or fanatical spirit can be resisted (Article III, no. 6)(Lutherans, 1577-1578).*

Man cannot truly be human unless he is right with God. Man's behavior is directly related to his standing before his Creator. Either a man will labor to be right with the Court (works), or he does not care if he is right with the Court (rebellion), or his effort to be justified springs from the consolation of being right with the Court (peace).

**Peter Kreeft** in his criticism of Protestantism noted the need for Catholics to learn about justification when he said the following:

*Until we Catholics know the foundation, Protestants are not going to listen to us when we try to teach them about the upper stories of the building. Perhaps God allows the Protestant/Catholic division to persist not only because Protestants have abandoned many precious truths taught by the Church but also because **many Catholics have never been taught the most precious truth of all, that salvation is a free gift of grace, accepted by faith.*** (Kreeft, 1988) (<http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/apologetics/ap0027.html>).

The doctrine of justification is misunderstood not only by Catholics, but by most Protestants.

Since the Catholics have perfected a "works-based" righteousness system of salvation and because they have thought through their position and articulated it in the Counter-Reformation,

**Biblical justification is best contrasted with the Catholic canons on this subject;** that is, examining the Catholic view of justification is highly instructive. Once these polar positions are understood it is much easier to pick up defective preaching on justification by Baptists, Methodists, Charismatics, and other teaching on this subject; that is, this work is not an attack on Catholics. It is a work that finds the works of Catholic theologians a great backdrop to discuss and contrast two views on justification.

### **Q: HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW LUTHER?**

*Present Truth Magazine* a.k.a. *Verdict Magazine* (published in the 70s) once asked, “How would Martin Luther answer the following questions?” (Brinsmead, 1972).

**On what basis does God accept a man?<sup>31</sup>**

- A. A life of obedience to law
- B. Faith in the heart

**What is the first and primary essential requirement for salvation?<sup>32</sup>**

- A. Works in conformity to law
- B. Faith as a possession of man

**What does man need?<sup>33</sup>**

- A. Righteousness that comes by obedience to law
- B. Faith as law

## **WHAT DOES “TO JUSTIFY” MEAN?**

All agree justification is of God, but not all are agreed on the meaning of the term.

1. What does “justify” mean?<sup>34</sup>

- A. To make just?
- B. To declare just

2. What is the proper nature of justification?<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Correct answer is A.

<sup>32</sup> Correct answer is A.

<sup>33</sup> Correct answer is A.

<sup>34</sup> Correct answer is A.



A. Subjective justification

B. Objective justification

3. What is the locus of justification?<sup>36</sup>

A. Is justification external to the person justified?

B. Or, is justification internal to the person justified?

4. What is the impact of justification?<sup>37</sup>

A. Is justification *efficient* and *creative*?

B. Or, is justification *declarative*?

**Importance of the Question:**

More and more people are turning to Catholicism without knowing their true belief system; that is, many dignitaries, the new adherents are NPCs,<sup>38</sup> are rushing to join this false church.

*Since Tocqueville's time, Catholics have percolated throughout important Washington institutions. A majority of the justices on the Supreme Court from both Democrat and Republican appointments are Catholics. They include Amy Coney Barrett, Samuel Alito, Sonia Sotomayor, Clarence Thomas, and Chief Justice John Roberts. Neil Gorsuch was raised Catholic and attended Catholic school, but as of 2017, he attended an Episcopal Church. Catholics also help run major think tanks in D.C. Kevin Roberts, the president of The Heritage Foundation, is probably the most prominent example. (Rumor Mill News: CGI's Morgan: Catholics Are Becoming the New Mainline).*

**ARE YOU ROMAN CATHOLIC OR PROTESTANT?**

Answer (a) or (b) whichever is correct? (Brinsmead, 1972 )

**One:**

(a) God gives a man right standing with Himself by mercifully accounting him innocent and virtuous

(b) God gives a man right standing with Himself by actually making him into an innocent and virtuous person.

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<sup>35</sup> Correct answer is B.

<sup>36</sup> Correct answer is A.

<sup>37</sup> Correct answer is B.

<sup>38</sup> Definition: "NPC" stands for "Non-Player Character" and is used as a metaphor to describe someone who is perceived as lacking independent thought or blindly following trends.) (Lights are on but nobody is home!!!)

## PILLAR FOUR: THE EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S HISTORY ON THE BELIEVER

### Two:

- (a) God gives a man right standing with Himself by placing Christ's goodness and virtue to his credit.
- (b) God gives a man right standing with Himself by putting Christ's goodness and virtue into his heart.

### Three:

- (a) God accepts the believer because of the moral excellence found in Jesus Christ.
- (b) God makes the believer acceptable by infusing Christ's moral excellence into his life.

### Four:

- (a) If a Christian becomes "born again" (regenerate and transformed in character); he will achieve a right standing with God.
- (b) If a Christian has a right standing with God by faith, he will experience a transformation in character.

### Five:

- (a) We achieve a right standing with God by faith alone.
- (b) We receive a right standing with God by faith which has become active by love.

### Six:

- (a) We achieve right standing with God by having Christ live out His life of obedience in us.
- (b) We achieve a right standing with God by accepting the fact that He obeyed the law perfectly for us.

### Seven:

- (a) We achieve a right standing with God by following Christ's example by the help of His enabling grace.
- (b) We follow Christ's example because His life has given us right standing with God.

### Eight:

- (a) God first pronounces that we are good in His sight, then gives us His Spirit to make us good.
- (b) God sends His spirit to make us good, and then He will pronounce that we are good.

### Nine:

- (a) Christ's intercession at God's right hand gives us favor in the sight of God.
- (b) It is the indwelling Christ that gives us favor in God's sight.

### Ten:

- (a) Only by faith in the doing and dying of Christ can we fully satisfy the claims of the Ten Commandments.

(b) We can satisfy the claims of the Ten Commandments by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>39</sup>

Source: (Questionnaire: Are you Catholic or Protestant?)

## CATHOLICISM AND JUSTIFICATION

The first open challenge in the Church to salvation by grace was by **Pelagius** (about A.D. 400)<sup>40</sup>, a British monk who denied original sin. He proposed that man was able to live a holy life by the natural powers given him of God, and thus obtain salvation.

**Augustine of Hippo** (354-430) vigorously opposed Pelagianism and catechized the orthodox view of man's depravity and need of divine grace.

In a series of councils the Catholic Church united with Augustine. **Augustine** championed the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. Within the Church, others arose to oppose Augustinian theology by proposing views which became known as **semi-Plagiarism**—a belief that man is tainted with sin but not to the point he cannot work with God to accomplish his own salvation; that is, semi-Pelagianism taught partial depravity. The councils of the Church even condemned semi-Pelagianism. Catholic authors cite these facts of history in an effort to demonstrate how the Church has always stood by the New Testament teaching of salvation by grace.

*"St. Paul tells us that we are 'justified freely by his grace, and that we are 'saved according to the election of grace, and if by grace it is not now by works: otherwise grace is no more grace'. To the Corinthians, he writes: 'By the grace of God I am what I am', and speaks to the Ephesians of 'Christ, by whose grace you are saved . . . for by grace you are saved . . . and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God'. He reminds Timothy that 'God has called me by his holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to his own purpose and grace'. And again: 'To every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ'. The same Apostle writes to Titus: 'That being justified by his grace, we may be heirs according to the hope of life everlasting'. and again to the Ephesians that God has predestinated us unto the praise of the glory of his grace, in which he hath graced us in his beloved Son'." (Daujat, 1959).*

The Council of Trent (1545-1563), in reaction to the Protestant Reformation, declared:

*" . . . **if they (men) were not born again in Christ**, they would never be justified, since **in that new birth** there is bestowed upon them, through the merit of His passion, the grace by which they are made just . . . "*

The **editors of the Roman Catholic Douay Version** make these footnote comments on Romans 3 and 4:

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<sup>39</sup> All the answers are A. except questions 4, 6, 7.

<sup>40</sup> Pelagius was a monk who lived in the late 300s and early 400s A.D. Pelagius taught that human beings were born innocent, without the stain of original or inherited sin. He believed that God created every human soul directly and therefore every human soul was originally free from sin.

*"The justification of which St. Paul here speaks **is the infusion of sanctifying grace** which alone renders a person supernaturally pleasing in the sight of God." "But justification, **that is, an infusion of sanctifying grace**, cannot be merited by us; it is an entirely gratuitous gift of God."*

In **The Life of Grace**, P. Gregory Stevens writes the following:

*"What is the reality of the justification accorded by God when man cooperates in faith? Is it merely like a statement of God declaring the sinner just? Or is it a divine act by which the sinner is internally transformed and becomes a new reality before God? Catholic thought has always been that the justice bestowed on man is a gratuitous gift (Gal. 3.6ff), and a true justice which actually transforms man into a person pleasing to God."*

*"Catholic doctrine on these questions, formulated in opposition to Lutheranism, was presented in full at the Council of Trent, as it had been previously by Pope Leo X in the Bull 'Exsurge Domine' of June 15, 1520. The teaching of Trent centers on two points of fundamental importance for the understanding of the Catholic doctrine on grace. First of all, **justification is a real and profound transformation of man, a genuine gift of sanctification to him. It can in no way be reduced to something purely external.**" (Stevens, 1963)*

*"In a clear, religiously profound statement the Council defines the inner nature and structure of justification. It does so in direct opposition to the extrinsicist position of Reformation theology. The heart of Catholic teaching is contained in this passage. First of all comes the assertion that "justification is not only the remission of sins, but sanctification and renovation of the interior man through the voluntary reception of grace and the gifts, whereby man becomes just instead of unjust, a friend instead of an enemy, that he may be an heir in the hope of life everlasting." The Council then details the causes of this inner transformation: its goal and purpose is God's glory; it is brought about by God through the merits of our Redeemer, and communicated to man in faith and baptism."*

Jesuit spirituality was a counter-reformation movement initiated by Ignatius Loyola who paid attention to divine voices inside him. He believed God is present within every man and man need only listen to him.

**Richard McBrien** has written in *Catholicism*:

*To be "spiritual" means to know, and to live **according to the knowledge**, that there is more to life than meets the eye. To be "spiritual" means, beyond that, **to know and to live according to the knowledge that God is present to us** in grace as the principle of personal, interpersonal, social and even cosmic transformation. To be "open to the Spirit" is to accept **explicitly who we are and who we are called always to become** and to direct our lives accordingly.*



Bernini's Portrayal of The Ecstasy of

*Jesuit (or Ignatian) spirituality mirrors that of Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), the founder of the Society of Jesus. It is a way of encountering ourselves and the world that encourages us to find God in everyone and everything (Jesuit website, Albuquerque, NM retrieved December 2013).*

The Jesuits lead their followers into retreats and meditation wherein the God-seeker waits and listens for a voice within; that is, he seeks a spiritual experience that defines who he is and how he stands with God. This experience is more authoritative, more powerful, and more influential than the Scriptures or the gospel. It is the worst kind of subjectivism because it does not need the Bible. Who needs the Bible when God speaks to you directly?

See Bernini's Portrayal of the Ecstasy of Saint Theresa. Notice the arrow piercing her heart. Theresa has had a dynamic, sensual experience with God that has overwhelmed her soul—an experience more authoritative than the resurrection of Christ or his written Word. This is Catholicism: deeply subjective, sensual, experiential, emotional, orgasmic, intuitive and introspective . . . and it leads to hell.

### **A SUMMARY OF THE CATHOLIC POSITION ON JUSTIFICATION**

- Justification is the internal renovation and renewing of a man, i.e. wretched subjectivism confused as human sanctification.
- Justification comes by an infusion of God's grace. Man is justified on the basis of what the Holy Spirit has done in him.
- Justification means that man himself is made just, made pleasing to God in his own person by an infusion of righteousness into the heart.

In common street terms, Catholic justification may be expressed this way: When God's acts on a vile sinner, God pours his grace into the heart of man changing him in such a way that he can be just before God.

A sincere Catholic may say: "I am a sinner. I cannot save myself. I need Jesus to come into my heart to save me, change me, and help me to be good so I can be just in God's sight; that is, I need God's grace to make me 'born again' so I can change and please God." Jean Daujat (The Theology of Grace) said it this way:

*"Sinful man cannot, of himself, be pleasing to God. For that, he must receive a gift from God which transforms him interiorly, cleanses him and sanctifies him by adorning him with qualities that render him pleasing to his Creator." (Daujat, 1959)*

If we cannot see what is wrong with the above brief on the Catholic doctrine of justification by faith, then it is because we have become good Catholics.

The Reformers saw justification as *a declaring righteous* but Catholics see justification as *making righteous*.

Consequently, we need to develop a Biblical understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith and contrast it with Catholicism. Catholicism is all about the religious experience of man to the neglect of the experience of Christ at Calvary and His work to save sinners. Catholicism is about the Holy Spirit's work "in me," and evangelical Christianity is all about the work of God "outside of me" in history through Christ at the cross.

### **THE NEED FOR JUSTIFICATION**

The universal that sinful man faces is a holy God (Habakkuk 1:3; Isaiah 64:6).

**Q:** How can a sinner be right with God? This should be the question on every man's mind.

*Job 9:2 . . . but how should man be just with God?*

*Job 25:4 How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?*

**Popular Christianity** is asking, "What can God do for me? How can I get Him to bless my plans and objectives in life? The true God-seeker asks, "How can I please God?" It appears that modern man is more interested in apologetics than the gospel. The creature is more interested in demanding that God be justified before man for the way He is running the universe than he is in how he can meet the demands of a holy God.

Modern man is asking. "How can I make more money rather than how can I be rich before God?"

Modern man places God on trial before man's tribunal rather than seeing himself on trial before God's tribunal in the eschatological judgment.

Justification does not make sense to modern man because he is not preoccupied with his sins, and how a sinner can find acceptance before God. Modern man sees God as having more sugar than the fairy godmother -- One who forgives everybody. If modern psychologized man has a problem, it is because he sees his plight as related to low self-esteem and a poor self-image, rather than the fact, his image is marred by sin. Who is saying, "Oh wretched man that I am. How can I, a sinner, be just before God?" Yet, this is what the sixteenth century man was asking. The sixteenth century man was aware that life was hard and short. He was much more preoccupied about how to stand before God's eschatological judgment than he was about his own self-image.

### **THE CONTEXT OF JUSTIFICATION**

The context of justification is the eschatological judgment. "*We know the judgment of God is according to truth*" (Romans 2:3). "*It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment*" (Hebrews 9:27). Judgment has to do with the courts, and the courts have to do with law.

When a sinner realizes he has to face the bar of God's justice (Romans 2:1-16), the doctrine of justification suddenly becomes of interest. ***One cannot fully appreciate or proclaim the doctrine of justification unless one understands and proclaims the judgment of God.*** Paul pronounces all guilty, before he introduces the good news of justification in Romans (3:20).

*Daniel 7:9, 10 "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened."*

### **THE MEANING OF THE TERM JUSTIFICATION**

The words *justified* and *righteous* are from the same Greek word (*dikaiosis*, **a noun**; *dikaio*s, an adjective). When used as a noun, *dikaiosis* can be translated *justification* or *righteous* or *righteousness*.

When used as a **verb**, *dikaio* can be translated "to make righteous," "declare righteous," or "to justify."

***Justification is a judicial, forensic term.*** That is, it is a legal word associated with courts of law. In the Biblical sense, it is a word associated with one's standing in God's court. The gospel can come to us in the horticultural model (vine and branches), or the pastoral model (shepherd and sheep), or the human-relations model (forgiveness and reconciliation), or the biological model (the new birth), or the sanctuary model (propitiation), or the medical model (healing), but Paul uses the legal model (justification) to explain salvation in Romans.

***Justification is an eschatological word.*** That is, it is associated with the judgment of God. Since it is appointed to man once to die and after this the judgment (Hebrews 10:27), and since God's judgment is an event associated with the Eschaton (Revelation 20:10ff, justification is an eschatological concept.

***Justification is a biblical term*** primarily discussed in the Book of Romans, Paul's legal treatise on the Gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16).

***Justification is opposite that of condemnation*** (Romans 5:15). It has to do with one's standing in a court of law. Once the verdict is passed, one will either be condemned or justified. The judicial verdict (justified) remains distinct from inner healing (regeneration).

***Justification does not mean "just-as-if-I-had-never-sinned," or "to be made into an innocent person."*** This would place a man on the ground of Adam making it possible to fall from grace. A state of innocence is not desirable because it is only a matter of time before the innocent sins again.

***Justification does not mean "to be forgiven" or "to be pardoned."*** Forgiveness is the cancellation of debts. While a sinner does need to have his debts pardoned, he needs much more. He needs righteousness deposited into his account.

***Justification does not mean "just-as-if-I-had-died."*** This cute aphorism implies freedom from punishment via substitution. Justification is less about substitution and more about imputation. It is not so much about punishment of sin as it about the gift of positive righteousness.

***Justification does not mean "to be put on probation."*** Violation of probation can cause one to be placed back under the penal system. What is needed for the sinner is not *probation* but justification.

***Justification does not mean "to be born again" or "to be regenerated."*** Regeneration is a creative act, while justification is a legal act—a verdict, a decree, a judicial decision, a Court order. Regeneration and justification must be seen as two distinct effects of the gospel.

***Justification does not mean "to be made holy."*** Justification is not an ontological<sup>41</sup> quality or a personal attribute; it is a forensic declaration. We must make a distinction between the work of Christ *for us*, and the work of the Holy Spirit *in us*. To fail to preserve a distinction between justification by Christ's substitutionary work *for us* and the sanctifying work of the Spirit *in us* confuses the gospel with law, and the righteous of the Creator with the righteousness of man.

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<sup>41</sup> Ontology (from ὄντος or "being; that which is," present participle of the verb "be": the philosophical study of the nature of being, of existence, of reality.

***Justification or “righteousness” does not mean “godliness.”*** Justification does not change the object to satisfy the Court, but it does change how the Court regards the object. What is changed is status, not being.

***Justification does not mean to make righteous.*** Andreas Osiander, the German pastor who opposed Luther, contended that God must *make* a man righteous so he can *declare* a man righteous. He proposed that Christ indwells the believer with His divine righteousness then proceeds to make him righteous. If such be the case, the question is, “how good do I have to become in order to be justified?” Such a system is slavery, and it binds a man to sycophant service to God. Justification means that a person has a righteous standing in a court of law, not that he is made righteous in order to be declared righteous (Cited by Verdict, Vol. 2, No. 6, p. 12).

***Justification is not the same as sanctification.*** While sanctification follows justification, *imputed* righteousness is distinct from *imparted* righteousness. *External justification* must not be confounded with *inner transformation*.

### **THE MEANING OF THE WORD RIGHTEOUSNESS**

The word *righteousness* does not mean *godliness*. Godliness has to do with being God-like. Godliness defines the character of the man. Righteousness is not a virtue like *kindness*, though righteousness springs from virtue. Righteousness is a relational word which measures ***the fulfillment of duties to contractual responsibilities***.

The word *righteous* has an interesting context in Genesis 38. This is a messy chapter about a dysfunctional family, but it sheds light on the meaning of the term “*righteous*.” God judged Er and the semen-spilling of Onan. Judah’s solicitation of the services of a prostitute and the deceptive act of prostitution by Tamar resulted in an incestuous act between Judah, the father-in-law, and Tamar his daughter-in-law. In the middle of these tainted sexual encounters, Judah declared about Tamar, “She is more righteous than I.” What did he mean by “*righteous*?” Simply this: Tamar, though her means was wrong, was loyal to the family of Judah. She waited faithfully for Judah to arrange a proper marriage between her and Shelah, Judah’s youngest son, in fulfillment of kinsmen redeemer responsibilities. Though Tamar played the prostitute, she was declared “*more righteous*” than Judah.

From this turbid affair we learn that *righteousness is a relational word* that measures one’s faithfulness to the responsibilities of a given relationship. In this case, Tamar was faithful to the family of Judah. Judah was not diligent in fulfilling his responsibility to arrange a marriage between Tamar and Shelah in order to raise up children for the family. Though her means was debauched, her ends were noble. Judah recognized the nobility of her loyalty to the family and announced, “*She is more righteous than I.*” God also honored Tamar for her loyalty. She is one of the five women mentioned in our Lord’s genealogy (Matthew 1).

**Righteousness, therefore, means one has fulfilled his or her responsibility in a given relationship.** Vertically, a person is righteous if he fulfills the responsibilities that God has given him. A righteous man is described in Psalm 15 as a man that has fulfilled his duty to God and men. But, who among us, save Christ, has been faithful to God? Thus, there must be another way to be just in heaven’s court.

### **DEFINITION OF JUSTIFICATION**



**Justification is a forensic term**, i.e. a legal averment pertaining to the courts. It comes from the Latin word *forensia* and means “before the forum” or “before the bar.” It is a declaration by a court that an accused has a right standing in the sight of the law. *Justify* (dikaiw,sei, dikaioo) means “to show to be righteous,” “or to put into a right relationship with God.” It is an action of the court (Deuteronomy 25:1). The **positive side** of justification is to “be declared righteous.” The **negative side** of the judicial decision is *un-imputed* sin or to be declared condemned (Deuteronomy 32:1, 2).

Theologically, justification means *to be declared righteous* by a court of law. Furthermore, the believer needs to understand that just as **our sins** were *imputed to Christ*, **His righteousness** is *imputed to us* who believe.

Justification, therefore, is the judicial act of God whereby He declares a man righteous and treats him as such.

Biblically speaking, it is important to understand that the court’s declaration of “*justification*” does not change the object to satisfy the demands of law, but it does change how the object is regarded in the eyes of the law. While regeneration creates a change in character and is an act of a *Father*, justification changes one’s status by an act of a *Judge*. **The renewal of regeneration, which follows justification, must not be confounded with justification.**

**Luther** reasoned:

*A capuchin says: wear a gray coat and a hood, a rope round thy body, and sandals on thy feet. A cordelier says: put on a black hood; an ordinary papist says: do this or that work, hear mass, pray, fast, give alms, etc. But a true Christian says: I am justified and saved only by faith in Christ, without any works or merits of my own; compare these together, and judge which is the true righteousness (306). (Luther)*

The Formula of Concord (1577) put it this way:

*Concerning the righteousness of faith before God we believe, teach, and confess unanimously, in accordance with the comprehensive summary of our faith and confession presented above, that poor sinful man is justified before God, that is, absolved and declared free and exempt from all his sins, and from the sentence of well-deserved condemnation, and adopted into sonship and heirship of eternal life, without any merit or worth of our own, also without any preceding, present, or any subsequent works, out of pure grace, because of the sole merit, complete obedience, bitter suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Christ alone, whose obedience is reckoned to us for righteousness (Article III, no. 9).*

## FOUR KINDS OF JUSTIFICATION

| VERSE | JUSTIFICATION | MEANING | PERSONS |
|-------|---------------|---------|---------|
|-------|---------------|---------|---------|

#### PILLAR FOUR: THE EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S HISTORY ON THE BELIEVER

|             |          |            |              |
|-------------|----------|------------|--------------|
| Romans 5:9  | By blood | Basis      | God with God |
| Rom 3:24    | By grace | Channel    | God with man |
| Romans 3:28 | By faith | Reception  | Man to God   |
| James 2:24  | By works | Expression | Man to man   |

### AGENCY AND JUTIFICATION

| VERSE              | PERSON        | TASK   |
|--------------------|---------------|--------|
| 1 Corinthians 6:11 | By the Spirit | Agency |
| Romans 3:26        | By God        | Agency |
| Galatians 2:16     | By Christ     | Agency |

### THE JUSTIFICATION OF ABRAHAM

In Genesis 15 Abraham was scared spitless that the five marauding kings he defeated in his rescue of Lot would return and retaliate against his household. Wanting assurance of God's favor, he prayed. Here

Abraham received an answer from the High Court of Heaven. God gave him a verdict. Abraham believed God and the Judge declared him judicially righteous in his sight. What a blessing! What a comfort! What revelation!

***Genesis 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.***

The declaration was a comfort to Abraham, but it immediately raises the question: What if I blow it? What if I sin in the future? How will God treat me?

Justification encompasses more than *being declared righteous*; it also involves being *treated as righteous* by the Court.

**In Genesis 20**, we see how God treated Abraham when he deceived an eastern prince. When Abimelech, King of Gerar, eyed Sarah and sought to procure her for his harem, Abraham instructed Sarah to say, “*I am the sister of Abraham.*” Such a strategy was designed to keep powerful kings from assassinating Abraham in order to take Sarah as a wife. Governments often use intimidation and coercion to obtain what they want. Out of fear and weakness, Abraham lied to protect Sarah<sup>42</sup>, and Abimelech, out of ignorance, took Sarah into his harem. A man does not owe the truth to an abuser of truth. From the story we learn that Abraham deliberately, consciously misled the king. Abimelech believed Sarah and innocently took her into his harem. But . . .

- It was Abimelech who was judged, not Abraham.
- It was Abimelech who was rebuked, not Abraham.
- It was Abimelech who was in danger of capital punishment, not Abraham.
- It was Abimelech whose life was in danger, not Abraham.
- It was Abimelech's household that needed healing, and not Abraham's.
- It was Abimelech who needed prayer, not Abraham.
- It was Abraham who prayed for Abimelech's healing.

From this Biblical story we learn that when God declares a man righteous, ***he also treats him as such!!  
Selah!***

## **JUSTIFICATION AND THE BOOK OF ROMANS**

*Romans 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

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<sup>42</sup> Abraham lied to Abimelech, but God did not condemn him for it. No one owes the truth to a tyrant who will abuse the truth.

It can be said that the book of Romans is about two great doctrines: justification and sanctification.

**Romans 1-5:11:** This section is about justification. Justification, or *ho dikaios ek pisteos* (righteousness by faith). In this section the terms “faith” and “believe” are used repeatedly. The word *pistis* occurs 29 times. The word “believe” occurs 8 times in chapters 1-4. In chapter 5-8, they occur only 2 times.

**Romans 5:12-8:34:** This section is about sanctification. The word *zoe* (zwh,) is used twelve times, but only twice in 1:18-4:25. This section is about the life that justification brings to a man who believes and identifies himself with the history of Christ, a.k.a. “*identification*.” Identification with the history of Christ results in a righteous life, a life of the Spirit, a life of conformity to the image of Christ. The first section of Romans announces the death of man and how man can obtain new life by placing his faith in Christ; the second session announces victory over sin when one claims (“*reckons*”) the benefits of Christ’s history for himself.

## THE BENEFITS OF JUSTIFICATION

- Iniquity is not imputed (Psalm 32:2)
- A complete new standing before God (Romans 4:5)
- Peace with God (Romans 5:1). We recognize the war between us and God is over when we yield to the cross.
- Saved from wrath (Romans 5:9): We have the assurance we will be delivered from the wrath to come.
- Rest (Hebrews 4:1ff): We no longer feel the need to perform for acceptance. We cease trusting in ourselves, and trust totally in Him. We endure criticism because we know our performance is not the basis of our acceptance with God.
- Identification (Romans 6:3-6): We share in the benefits of Christ’s history.
- Freedom from law (Romans 7): Our identification with Christ frees us from bondage to legalistic righteousness. Man is never free, however, from duty to law as a Christian man. Love is a fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:8).
- Glorification (Romans 8:18): We have the assurance we will share in the glory of the Eschaton by virtue of resurrection.
- Unreceived accusations (Romans 8:33): We have the assurance there are no accusations against us that will stand up in God’s Court.
- No condemnation (Romans 8:1): If God has forgiven, and we are “declared righteous,” there is no accusation to be sustained before the Court.
- Adoption and sonship (Romans 8:16): We inherit the full rights as Sons of God.

#### PILLAR FOUR: THE EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S HISTORY ON THE BELIEVER

- **Worship (Romans 12:1):** We glorify God for what He has accomplished. We look away from self and look to Christ. Rejecting all form of self-justification, we adore Him who obeyed the law perfectly for us on our behalf.
- **Service:** We serve not to be accepted, but because we are accepted. Service spring from grace, not because we must serve to be accepted, but because we are grateful debtors to God's acceptance of us (Hebrews 12:28).

**Grace:** Because God treats us as righteous; we treat other believers as righteous. Grace produces optimism, not about sinful man, but about justified children (Romans 15:1-7).

#### THREE PERSONS JUSTIFIED

**The justification of the believer:** The believer is justified (Romans 2:24) when he accepts the substitutionary work of Christ as his basis for a right standing before the high court of heaven.

**The justification of Christ:** Christ was justified by the Spirit (2 Timothy 3:15, 16). When Christ died, he did not die because He was morally unfit to stand in the presence of God. Sin was imputed to him. Imputation changed his standing before the court, but it did not change his character. The resurrection was the Spirit's declaration that Christ was personally, morally, constitutionally without sin.

**The justification of God:** God was declared just (Romans 3:26ff): God is not only in the business of justifying people. He is in the business of justifying them justly. His divine law was maintained and honored in the whole process of justifying the sinner.

### JUSTIFICATION: PROTESTANTISM V. CATHOLICISM

Differences between Catholicism and Protestantism on Justification by faith (Present Truth, October 1995, Vol. 4, No. 5, p. 40):

| PROTESTANT                                  | CATHOLIC                                    |
|---|---|
| To justify means "to account as righteous"  | To justify means "to make righteous"        |
| Justification comes by imputation           | Justification comes by infusion             |
| Grace of God in Christ makes man acceptable | Sanctifying grace makes man acceptable      |
| Man is justified by extrinsic righteousness | Man is justified by intrinsic righteous     |
| God justifies the ungodly who believe       | God justifies only those who are born again |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Justification is God's verdict upon man in Christ               | Justification is God's regenerating act in man                      |
| The sinner is J by Christ's imputed righteousness               | Sinner are justified because righteousness is poured into his heart |
| Justification enables God to treat the sinner as just           | Justification means that the sinner is really just                  |
| The sinner is pronounced righteous because Christ is righteous. | Pronounced righteous because God makes him righteous.               |
| Justification is by faith alone                                 | Justification comes by faith being active by charity                |

The Catholic does **not** teach salvation by works; Rather, Catholicism teaches that man cannot save himself; therefore, he needs the help of Christ to perfect his works. The Catholic believes a man must be born again by the Spirit so he can be just before God; that he needs Christ in his heart helping him to be righteous.

In short, the Catholic teaches a person must invite Christ into his heart so he can be saved. Sacraments are needed to cleanse weekly failures. Catholicism is highly subjective, highly introspective, and highly performance orientated. Whereas the gospel takes man's eyes off himself to see the works of Another.

## JOHN NEWMAN AND JUSTIFICATION

The prevailing doctrine among Roman Catholics was that God justified the righteous (thesis); the belief among Lutherans was that God justified the wicked (Romans 4:5) (antithesis). John Newman, the great Catholic theologian took the conflicting propositions and created a Hegelian dialectic; that is, a synthesis (Newman, 1908 Ninth Impression, Lecture 3).

**Thesis:** God justifies the godly (Catholic position).

**Antithesis:** God justifies the ungodly (Reformed position).

**Synthesis:** God makes a man righteous at the same time He declares him righteous (Newman).

*Lecture 8. Righteousness views as a Gift and as a Quality.*

*On these grounds, as regards the three doctrines above drawn out,—of the righteousness of Christ imputed only, imparted only, and both imputed and imparted by His real indwelling,*

*I say, then, justification by obedience is anyhow true; it is sound doctrine, if we hold another doctrine too; it is incomplete, if we omit that other doctrine; it becomes erroneous, if we deny it.*

*When it is held exclusively among ourselves, it often takes the following shape: that God accepts our sincere obedience, as if it were perfect; or that God will save us if we do our part; or that God has done His part in Baptism, and now we must do ours. Such statements are most true and Scriptural, if they are not meant to deny (what may be called) our Sacramental life, the fount of grace which Holy Baptism has stored within us, and the awful realities of Holy Communion,*

**John Newman** united justification and sanctification as a single concept. His argument was based on God's *creative Word*. Newman argued that God said, "*Let there be light, and there was light.*" The Word of God is the creative Word. God speaks, and it is done. When He declares a man right, He of necessity makes him into a righteous person. This is called "effective justification." To Newman justification was a both a *declaring righteous* and a *making righteous*. By synthesis, Newman tried to unite Protestantism and Catholicism.

**Q:** What is at stake here? Everything! The purity of gospel and the remedy for sin!

*"God is pleased to grant remission of all past sins, for the sake of His Blessed Son, on account of faith only; but He requires from those whom He thus graciously receives into His favor, an implicit obedience to His commands in future; if they disobey, their pardon is cancelled, the state of acceptance forfeited, and liability to punishment ensues."—p. 124 ... "*  
(Newman, 1908 Ninth Impression, Notes in Lecture 8).

## **THE FALLACY OF NEWMAN'S FUNDAMENTAL PREMISE**

Newman's *prima facie* argument makes sense. However, when God called light, and mountains, and trees, and animals, and men into existence, they were not yet created. A separate word was used to bring other creatures into existence. The same happens with justification. Justification and sanctification are two separate acts of God with two distinct meanings.

**Geoffrey J. Paxton**, an Anglican clergyman and principal of the Queensland Bible Institute, Brisbane, Australia, raises the question:

*What does "to justify" mean in the New Testament? All agree that justification is of God, but not all agree on the precise significance of justification. The most straightforward way of expressing the problem is this: Does "to justify" mean to declare just," or does it mean "to make just"? Another way is to speak of "objective justification" and "subjective justification." That is, does justification mean an event objective and external to the person justified — an "outside of me" justification — or does it mean that something takes place "within" the person justified—a "subjective" reality? "Declarative" or "efficient" and "declarative or creative" are other ways of expressing the two views of justification which have been represented in the history of theology.*

*Of course, to contend for an "either—or" in justification is not to suggest that nothing takes place within the justified, as we shall see later. All we are insisting upon here is that*

*justification is either "the declaration of" or "the creating of"; **it is not both a declaration and a creation.***

*In this lecture it is our business to contend for the position **that justification is God's declaring a person just, not God's making a person just.** "To justify" means the same as "to pronounce righteous" a person who, in himself, is anything but righteous. In fact, the person who is justified is, in himself, full of rottenness and repugnant to true holiness. Justification is thoroughly and completely objective. (Paxton)*

Justification is not both a declaration and a creation; it is not both objective and subjective; it is not both external and internal. Justification means to declare just (objective righteousness). Sanctification means to make just (subjective righteousness). The righteousness of justification is external. It is declarative. It is not internal and creative.

**Reasoning:** When one glorifies God, he does not make God glorious. He declares him to be glorious. When one declares God just, he does not make Him just. He announces his Justice. When God justifies a man, it is not an act that produces righteousness; but an act that declares a man right in His sight.

### **THE ARGUMENT FOR OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION**

**Looking at the persons are who are justified in the New Testament (NT):** There are two types of persons who are justified in the NT: either (a) the perfectly righteous individual, either the perfect God or perfect man, and (b) the ungodly man.

#### **JUSTIFICATION OF THE PERFECT GOD**

*1 Corinthians 15:1 And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, **justified God**, being baptized with the baptism of John.*

This is the justification of a perfect God. The people did not make Him righteous, but they did declare Him to be righteous.

#### **JUSTIFICATION OF THE PERFECT MAN**

*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory (1 Timothy 3:16).*

Christ is declared to be righteous, not made righteous. See also (Acts 3:14; 22:14; 1 John 2:1).

#### **JUSTIFICATION OF THE IMPERFECT MAN**

*Romans 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

Justification happens to the ungodly, not the godly. It is a declarative work, not a creative work; it is reckoning not an infusing of righteousness to those who believe.

**Looking at the antithesis of justification:** The opposite of "to justify" is not "to deprave" but "to condemn." If "to justify" meant "to make holy" the antithesis would infer that condemnation means "to make unholy." Surely, this is not the case.



Through Adam's disobedience many were made sinners (Romans 5:19). Adam was judicially condemned, and because of man's connection with , all men are condemned. This is true for salvation as well as the propagation of sin. Through the obedience of Christ, many were made righteous -- not by creation, but by declaration. Because of our connection with Christ, we are judicially declared righteous -- thus, we gain a legal standing with God through faith.

Just as condemnation does **not** mean "*making wicked*," so justification does **not** mean "*making good*." Justification means "*to acquit*" and **not** "*to make holy*."

### Looking at the equivalent expressions:

- In John 3:18, the reward for believing is not purification, but non-condemnation.
- In John 5:24, believing in Him is said to bring freedom, not from corruption, but freedom from condemnation.
- In 2 Corinthians 5:19-21, the work of reconciliation is explained appositionally, not as purifying men from sins, but as not counting men's sins against them. Justification is the non-imputation of sin. Sin was *imputed* to Christ forensically. It does not mean sin was *imparted* to Him, but *imputed* to Him. He was not made sinful! He was declared sinful.

How then are we made righteous before God? It is not by *impartation* of righteousness but by *imputation* of the righteousness of Christ to our account. And, the co-mingling of the two is the error of the Catholic Church. Paxton explains:

*The Council of Trent (1545) and some of her devotees after her have fallen into the terrible mistake of making one figure represent two inseparable but quite different things—pardon and renewal, deliverance from the penalty of sin and deliverance from the power of sin. The council declared that justification consists both of remission and internal renovation (Paxton).*

### Looking at definitions

To ascribe justification as an act of *making holy* is to give justification the same meaning as sanctification. In Catholicism justification and sanctification become synonymous. This merging of definition is incorrect.

- Justification is objective; sanctification is subjective.
- Justification is forensic; sanctification is experiential.
- Justification means to declare holy; sanctification means to make holy.
- Justification is external (in God's mind); sanctification is internal (man's spirit).
- Justification is based on the work of Christ; sanctification the work of the Spirit.

While we make a distinction between justification and sanctification, we must also recognize they are linked. They are not synonymous, but they are related! When God declares a man righteous (justification), he proceeds to make him righteous (sanctification). When God justifies a man, he then

proceeds to regenerate the man. But, justification is **first**; "being born again" is **second** . . . and the two concepts **must be kept separate** even though they happen simultaneously from man's perspective.

*To speak of justification in the sense of "to make holy" is to give justification the same meaning as sanctification has in the greater portion of the Scriptures. Justification and sanctification become synonymous; both mean "to make holy." What in the Scriptures is meant to signify an outward deliverance from the penalty of sin (justification) is made to signify an inward deliverance from the power of sin (sanctification). This is the official position of the Church of Rome. What the Bible teaches as a judicial process Rome has made an infusion of a quality. However, the judicial process and the infusion of a quality are different things indeed! (Paxton)*

The human heart seems to be either apathetic about God, restless about God, or at peace with God. If justification depends on becoming a righteous person, then our justification would be based on the quality of our spiritual development. We would be preaching personal works, not faith in the works of Christ. It would base salvation on a change of character inside us by God's Spirit rather than on God's work outside of us through Christ at Calvary.

While we make a distinction between justification and sanctification, and justification and regeneration, we also recognize they are hinged together. They are not synonymous, but they are related. We do not deny the necessity of the new birth (regeneration), but we are implying **a logical necessity** when we say that justification precedes a change in character. A change of character follows justification, but it is not the basis of justification. When God declares a man righteous (justification), he proceeds to make him into a righteous person (sanctification).

A man is first justified, then regenerated in nature; and then sanctified.

## **TWELVE ASPECTS OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD**

**It is righteousness from God, not man.** This righteousness is from God and does not originate from man, is not produced by man, nor is it performed by man. It is God's righteousness. It comes from Him, and is performed by Him through Christ.

**It is righteousness apart from law, that is, apart from the principle of law. It does not come to man through a** system of rewards and punishment. It is not achieved by human effort as a reward for good deeds. While law can cleanse society of evil doers and restrain sinful man from committing crimes, law cannot regenerate man or society. It is grace that saves the sinner.

**It is a righteousness that is now being made known.** Biblical prophets assured us that it would come to mankind. It was described by Moses in the law and hoped for by the prophets. At last it is now here! It arrived in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

**This is righteousness by faith.** It does not originate within man, nor does it come to man because of religious devotion. The possession of righteousness is absolutely necessary to stand before God on the Day of Judgment. It is obtained by faith; that is, the individual's trust in the doing and dying of Christ on his behalf.

**This righteousness is universally available.** Regardless of sex, race, color, social status, economic acquirements, cultural distinctives, or intellectual progress, men can gain access to this marvelous standing by faith.

**The declaration of righteousness results in justification.** Justification is a judicial term. It is a declaration of the judge after reviewing a case. In the Bible, it is an end time event and the hope of all who appear before the Almighty on the Last Day. It means "*to be declared righteous and treated as such; to be esteemed in the eyes of the thrice Holy God as in a right relationship to Him.*" Righteousness is credited to the account of all who believe now ahead of the final, ultimate, and climatic, holy judgment of God.

This righteousness is based on the person and work of Christ (3:24). This righteousness did **not** come out of "thin air." It is **not** without substance or historical authenticity. The righteousness accredited to the believing man is *the doing and obeying of Christ* as a Judahite under the law. "*His righteousness produced by His obedience*" is credited to the account of the believer.

The righteousness of God is that which is measured by the character of God Himself.

The righteousness of God is the demand of God.

The righteousness of God is that which God Himself provides.

**God's righteousness is vicarious righteousness**, that is, it is Christ's righteousness rendered to God in the sinner's place and on his behalf.

**God's righteousness is infinite righteousness** because it was the obedience of an infinite person, Jesus of Nazareth, who lived out the flesh and blood duty of obedience to God's law.

## **THE LEGAL BASIS FOR JUSTIFICATION**

*Romans 2:13 For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.*

By the term "*basis*," we mean the "foundation" or "chief pillar" holding up a structure. **The legal basis of salvation is not "faith," but works!** But, this statement needs explanation.

The legal basis of justification is not *faith in the heart* (a virtue) that motivates God to declare a man righteous, but a confidence based on what Christ accomplished at Calvary on behalf of sinners.

Biblical faith does not look on the inside of man as a cause for legal action, but looks outside of man to Christ's accomplishments as a basis of legal action. "Faith in the heart" is at the core of Roman Catholicism. But, faith in the heart is **no** substitute for actual, substantial, historical righteousness. If righteousness could be obtained by humans who work for it, the incarnate Christ need not have lived and died.

**The basis of justification is a life of obedience to law** (Romans 2:1-12). Man needs real righteousness -- a righteousness in conformity to law -- not good feelings in his heart. The righteousness that God accepts is the doing and dying of Christ. And, it is this righteousness that is God's free gift to the believing man.

*Justification, while it includes pardon, is not merely pardon. In order to be justified, a person must possess a Righteousness upon the ground of which the verdict must be pronounced. Justification as mere pardon and justification as the infusion of righteousness both fail to do justice to the immutable law of God's holiness and the deep-seated guilt of the rebel subject.*

*While the justification of the sinner is not by his works, if the justified sinner does not have good works, his justification is spurious. Good works are the "evidential cause" of justification, while God's glory is the final cause, the work of Christ is the meritorious cause, and faith is the instrumental cause. (Paxton)*

**The only basis of justification before God is obedience to law.** Faith is not a substitute for righteousness according to law. To say that faith is the basis of acceptance with God is legalistic, because it offers to God something which is within man as the basis of acceptance with God. The reformers stood against faith as the basis of justification.

**Faith is not the basis of acceptance with God.** *It is the doing and dying of Christ, which is the basis of acceptance.* Faith is merely the means of accepting his accomplishments:

*for He has redeemed, justified, and saved us from our sins as God and man, through His complete obedience; that therefore the righteousness of faith is the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and our adoption as God's children only on account of the obedience of Christ, which through faith alone, out of pure grace is imputed for righteousness to all true believers, and on account of it they are absolved from all their unrighteousness" (917, 4.) (Bente).*

The Westminster Confession of 1646 says the following:

*Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth: not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God (Westminster Confession of Faith, 1646, Chapter XI)*

Therefore, the reformers concluded that man is saved by works—not his own works, but the works of Christ: that is, man is saved by our Lord's obedience to law on behalf of the sinner; including, but not limited to his obedience unto death for sinners on Calvary.

*Romans 5;19 "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous"*

This belief is confirmed by pastors of our time. The 1999 document entitled, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration* (signed by many leading Evangelicals including Hybels, Hayford, MacArthur, Robertson, McCartney, Swindoll, Lucado, Stott, Ankerberg, Neff, Stowell, Stanley, etc.) expressly states:

*God's justification of those who trust in him, according to the Gospel, is a decisive transition, here and now, from a state of condemnation and wrath because of their sins to one of*

*acceptance and favor by virtue of Jesus' flawless obedience culminating in his voluntary sin-bearing death.*

*We affirm that Christ's saving work included both his life and his death on our behalf (Gal. 3:13). We declare that faith in the perfect obedience of Christ by which he fulfilled all the demands of the Law of God on our behalf is essential to the Gospel. We deny that our salvation was achieved merely or exclusively by the death of Christ without reference to his life of perfect righteousness*

## **SALVATION BY OBEDIENCE TO LAW**

We are **not** saved by prayer, but by the life and death of Christ. If prayer could save the soul, there would have been no need for God to send his Son to die for our sins. A man is **not** saved by asking God to forgive him. If His forgiveness could be obtained by prayer, Jesus need **not** have suffered and died.

**Q:** Take this a step further, “Would a man be saved by faith, if there was no cross?” Let’s put it another way, “If a man had faith, but did not know about the life and death of Christ, would he be saved?”

**Q:** “Is a man justified by faith or is man justified by works?” In other words, “Is a man’s faith the basis of God’s saving action, or is basis of God’s saving action the faithfulness of Christ?”

It is the contention of this student of Holy Scripture that the basis of salvation is **not** faith, **but** Christ’s faithfulness to God’s law-word; that fundamentally, works, not faith, is the basis of salvation. Believers are saved by the doing and dying of Another; i.e. we are **not** only saved by His death, but by His obedience to law. *Salvation is **not** based on our faithfulness, but the faithfulness of the Savior.*

**William R. Newell’s** objection to vicarious obedience of Christ as based on “blood” and that His “active obedience is not in any sense counted to us for righteousness” is more based on Keswick deeper life mysticism and a restrictive dispensational hermeneutic than a wholistic approach to theology (Newell, 1938 ). J.N. Darby and others would go to war on distinctions between the “death of Christ” and “the blood of Christ.” And, I believe this is the case here. God did **not** pull a “righteousness” out of thin air and exchange it for “faith in the blood of Christ.” **The righteousness God gives is based on the “faithfulness of Christ” unto all who believe** (Romans 3:21-22).

## **WHAT IS THE “FAITH OF CHRIST”?**

**Romans 3:22.** *“Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ (dia. pi,stewj Vhsou/ Cristou/) unto all and upon all them that believe (tou.j pisteu,ontaj): for there is no difference.” What does the phrase “faith of Jesus Christ” mean?*

### **THE CONTEXTUAL ARGUMENT**

Paul’s treatise on the Gospel in his letter to the Romans is explained in legal terms. It is a courtroom drama with Paul acting as both a prosecutor of mankind and a defense attorney for believers. Prior to this verse, Paul, acting as a prosecutor in the case *God v. Mankind* (Romans 1-3), pronounced all men guilty

of breaking God's law (3:10-20). But, in verse 21, Paul crossed the aisle and put on the wig of an English barrister in order to argue the case for the justification of the believer.

Paul's forensic argument is as follows: To be justified in God's Court, a man must possess righteousness (Romans 2:1-13). **First**, the bad news: all men are guilty of breaking God's law (3:10ff). **Second**, the good news: There is a righteousness that comes from God that enables men to possess what the Court requires. But, what is this righteousness, and where does it come from?

### SEMANTIC ARGUMENT

**Semantically**, the phrase, "*faith of Jesus Christ*," is usually interpreted as "*faith in Jesus*." "faith in Jesus" is the default interpretation of Evangelicals because are eager to prove that men are not saved by works.

But, if this is so, why did Paul say "unto all that believe?" Why a reference to two responses of "*faith*" in the same verse (3:22). Could it be that the phrase "faith in Jesus" is a poor translation **and should be translated "*faithfulness of Jesus*"** instead of the "faith in Jesus?"

### THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

**Theologically**, Paul is saying that sinners are declared "guilty" in His Court; that in order to stand before a holy God, a man needs real righteousness — substantive righteousness, **not** synthetic righteousness; that in the gospel, substantive righteousness is available to the believer, even the righteousness of Christ; that faith is **not** a virtue required by God, **nor** is faith a substitute for substantive righteousness; that faith is the confidence that Christ lived a righteous life on behalf of His elect and that God gives the believer Christ's righteousness when he trusts Him. For example there is a big difference being paid a hundred dollars in gold bullion and being paid a hundred dollars in FRNs. When God justifies a man he gives him substance -- the silver and gold of Christ's righteousness, not synthetic paper notes.

### LINGUISTIC ARGUMENT

**Linguistically**, the phrase "*faith of Christ*" should be translated "***faithfulness of Christ***" for the following **reasons**:

**First**, the phrase "*faith of Christ*" (dia. pi, stewj Vlhsou/ Cristou/) is a subjective genitive (indicating origin or source), not an objective genitive. The term "*faith*" (pi, stewj) is a feminine noun, an ablative of agency. While it can be translated "*faith*," it can also be translated "***faithfulness***." Since "*Jesus Christ*" (Vlhsou/ Cristou) is in the genitive, this "*faith*" or "*faithfulness*" must be coming from Christ. Obviously, Paul is not talking about Christ's faith, but his acts of "*faithfulness*." Paul is **not** calling for an exercise of faith from the believer at this point in his argument as much as he is informing us that the "*righteousness from God*" that is available to the believer by faith is none other than the "***faithfulness of Christ***."

**Second**, Romans 1:17 states: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: As it is written, the just shall live by faith."

The phrase "*faith to faith*" (evk pi, stewj eivj pi, sti) contains two prepositions and is difficult to translate. The first (evk pi, stewj) appears to be an ablative of source, or that which is produced by a person. Is this "*faith*" produced by us or does it refer to "*faithfulness*" produced by Christ? Surely, our faith is based on the obedience of Christ to God's law; i.e. the ***faithfulness of Christ***."

The second prepositional phrase (eivj pi,sti) is either an accusative of purpose or accusative of result.

This phrase appears to be saying that “*our faith produces faithfulness*,” or it could be saying that Christ’s *faithfulness is the foundation of our faith*, or God’s righteousness comes from Christ’s faithfulness to produce man’s faith.

**Third**, Romans 3:3 says, “*For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?*” The phrase “*faith of God*” (th.n pi,stin tou/ qeou) indicates that the “*faith*” comes from God. “*From God*” is a genitive indicating the source. Obviously, this does not refer to “*faith*” being produced by God but the “*faithfulness of God*.” That is, *man’s unbelief does not nullify God’s faithfulness*.

Paul uses the term “evk pi,stewj Vlhsou/” in Romans 3:26: “*To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus* (evk pi,stewj Vihsou, faith of Jesus).” Again, is Paul calling for man to exercise faith or is he referring to the faithfulness of Christ? This could be saying that God justifies the one who stands on the fidelity of Christ.

“*faith*” (pistis) can refer to “*faith*” exercised by the believer or the word *pistis* can refer to the “*faithfulness*” of our Lord to obey God’s law and to die for the sins of the world. It is because of Christ’s faithfulness that God can be “*just*” and the “*justifier*” of believing men. Again, the default translation on this text is “*faith in Jesus*.” (KJV, RSV, ASV, NASB). Even Roberston, the famous Baptist scholar insist the translation should be “*faith in Jesus*.” Thus, translators took the “*safe*” position and translated “ek pistis” as “*faith in Jesus*.”

The preposition “*ek*” should **not** be translated “*when*.”

“*ek*” is a genitive of agency implying something coming from Christ; that is, His faithfulness.. Translating “*ek*” as “*in*” seems to be forcing an acceptable doctrine on the text in support of Luther and in opposition to the Catholic position of salvation by human merit.

“*ek*” is a preposition meaning “*from*” and can be translated “*because of*”; “*that is, God is able to be just and the justifier because of the faithfulness (pistis) of Jesus*. Translating “*ek*” as “*in*” mars the translation. While it is true, men are saved by placing their faith in Christ, this does not appear to be what is being announced here. The foundation of the gospel is *pistis* as in the “*faithfulness*” of Jesus.

Doctrinally, Paul asserts men are saved by works (Romans 2:6-16) . . . the works of Christ (Romans 3:22, 26)! Believers are saved by the doing **and** dying of Christ (Ironside). When a man believes in Christ, the “*obedience of Christ is credited to His account* (Romans 4:5). This is the gospel. We are saved by the works of Another.

**Fourth**, Romans 4:16 discusses the “*faith of Abraham*” (tw/| evk pi,stewj VAbraa,m).

**Q:** Does this refer to Abraham’s response of faith to God or does it refer to faithfulness resulting from his faith?

Here it appears to refer to Abraham’s response of faith and **not** his faithfulness. Because Abraham trusted God’s faithfulness, God was faithful to justify him.

**Fifth**, the phrase “*evk pi, stewj Cristou/*” is used twice in Galatians 2:16: “*know that a man is not justified by (his) observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ (evk pi, stewj Cristou/)*. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by the faithfulness of Christ (evk pi, stewj Cristou/,, faith of Christ) and not by (our) observing the law, because by (our) observing the law no one will be justified.” It appears best to render “*evk pi, stewj Cristou/*” here as the “**faithfulness of Christ**.” Paul taught we are not saved by our personal observance of the law. We are saved because of Christ’s personal observance of the law. We live because Christ was careful to do all that God requires so believing man can be justified in His sight.

**Sixth**, Galatians 2:20 also uses the phrase “faith of Christ” (evk pi, stewj Cristou/). “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God (evn pi, stei zw/ th/| tou/ ui'ou/ tou/ qe), who loved me, and gave himself for me.*”

The title “*Son of God*” is in the genitive indicating that “the faith” comes from Christ (a subjective genitive, not an objective genitive). Paul is not saying that “*I*” continue to live my Christian life by faith, but that *I live before God because the Lord obeyed the law perfectly on my behalf.*

**Seventh**, Philippians 3:9 says, “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ (dia. pi, stewj Cristou) the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

**Q:** Is Paul saying, “I want to stand before God being one who is justified by faith?” or, is Paul saying, “I want to stand before God, not having my own righteousness, but having the faithfulness of Christ credited to my account which comes by faith?”

It appears this ablative of agency refers to the **faithfulness of Christ**.

### **THE LEGAL ARGUMENT**

The word “*justification*” is a forensic term having to do with the courts. In God’s Court, only a man who keeps the law can be justified (Romans 2:13). Christ was “*born under the law*” (Galatians 4:4). He obeyed the law (Philippians 2:9-12), and He was the end of the law (Romans 10:4). Consequently, He was “*justified*” (declared righteous) by the Spirit when He was raised from the dead (1 Timothy 3:15, 16).

Even in God’s Court, faith is **not** a substitute for righteousness. ***A man must possess real, substantial righteousness if he is to stand before an all-holy God.*** The good news of the gospel is that the righteousness of Christ is given to the one who believes.

### **AN ARGUMENT FROM SUBSTITUTION**

When we say, “*Christ died for our sins,*” we are saying He became our substitute. If Christ took our sins in an act of substitution, then we must take His righteousness. If sin was imputed to him, then his “*faithfulness*” was imputed to us. *In other words, we are saved by works—HIS WORKS! We are saved, not only by his death, but also by His life of obedience to God’s law-word.*

In Summary, while it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between “*faith*” and “*faithfulness*,” it is at times important to do so. It would be incorrect to always interpret *pistis* (faith) as objective—something being



demanding of man. Sometimes, *it is subjective* and can refer to that which is produced by an agent—in this case something produced by Christ; i.e. *His faithfulness*.

It is important to understand the phrase “*faith of Christ*” (pi,stewj Cristou) as the “***faithfulness of Christ***.”

I once asked a Catholic neighbor (Mary) if she had any hope of eternal life. She said she did. So, I asked, “Mary, why do you think you will go to heaven?” Pounding on her heart, she said, “I have faith!” For 10 minutes she discussed her great faith and how much she believed in God. Mary did not believe her works could save her. Her hope rested in her faith. However, not once did she mention Christ, His life, His death, His atonement, His redemptive accomplishments or His resurrection. It was all about faith in her heart . . . and because she had subjective faith, God was somehow obligated to take her to heaven.

A few days later, it dawned on me what she was really saying. To her, “faith” was a virtue and she had this virtue that God honored dwelling in her heart. She expected to enter heaven because she had what God required, “*faith*.” But, I asked myself, “*Where was Christ in her testimony?*” And, if faith is all that is required to go to heaven, why did Christ have to live and die?

Peter Kreef, a Catholic apologist, has this to say:

*But many Catholics to this day have not learned the Catholic and biblical doctrine (of justification). They think we are saved by good intentions or being nice or sincere or trying a little harder or doing a sufficient number of good deeds. Over the past twenty-five years I have asked hundreds of Catholic college students the question: **If you should die tonight and God asks you why he should let you into heaven, what would you answer? The vast majority of them simply do not know the right answer to this, the most important of all questions, the very essence of Christianity.** They usually do not even mention Jesus! (Catholic Educator's Resource Center, Kreeft, 1988)*

The answer lies in our ability to understand the phrase “*faith of Christ*” (pi,stewj Cristou..).

Our personal faith is not the basis of our salvation. ***The faithfulness of Christ is the basis of our salvation.***

What men need in order to be saved is *substantive righteousness*, **not** virtuous faith with warm fuzzies.

The good news of the Bible is that this righteousness is given to those who believe as a free gift. This “*righteousness*” is none other than ***the faithfulness of Christ*** (pi,stewj Cristou).

As a Judahite, Jesus was born under the law. His obedience was tested and the Spirit declared, “*And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*” (Philippians 2:8). ***Because He obeyed perfectly, we can be justified perfectly.*** We are saved by works—not ours, **but** His works. We are saved by obedience -- **His obedience**. When we believe, His “*faithfulness*” and His “*works*,” His “*obedience*” is credited to us (believers) as a gift of God (Romans 5:15ff).

## IMPUTATION V. INFUSION

Roman Catholicism asserts that justification means *the infusion of righteousness into the heart of man*. In other words, the word “*imputation*” is defined as *infusion* in the Roman Catholic system.

To the Roman Catholic, *justification is both a declaration and a creation*; justification is contained in regeneration; that is, when a man is born again and God changes the man, He justifies the man.

The question immediately arise, “*How much change must be produced to be declared righteous in God’s sight? How virtuous does the heart have to become?*” What a quandary! What slavery! This system is nothing more than a sophisticated works program—if you change enough, God may, perhaps, hopefully, possibly take you to heaven.

Who are justified through Christ?

*But, though He died for all, yet do not all receive the benefit of His death, but those only unto whom the merit of His passion is communicated. For as in truth men, if they were not born propagated of the seed of Adam, would not be born unjust,-seeing that, by that propagation, they contract through him, when they are conceived, injustice as their own,-so, if they were not born again in Christ, they never would be justified; seeing that, in that new birth, there is bestowed upon them, through the merit of His passion, the grace whereby they are **made just** (Counsel of Trent (1547), Sixth Session, Chapter III).*

In Romans 4, Paul seeks to demonstrate how the believer can stand righteous before God apart from human merit through a process called “imputation.” The biblical word, *logizomai*, is translated:

- think (9)
- impute (8)
- reckon (6)
- count (5)- account (4)
- suppose (2)
- reason (1)
- number (1)

The word “*impute*” means *to reckon, count, compute, calculate, count over, to take into account, and to make an account of*. Metaphorically it means to transfer to one's account, to impute a thing to be something. It is used at least eleven (11) times in Romans chapter four where it is translated “*think*,” “*impute*,” “*count*,” and “*reckon*.” Thus, the word “*impute*” adds more proof that justification is a *declaration of righteousness*, **not** infusion of righteousness.

*Romans 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

All Christians believe that Christ died for the ungodly, but many will not accept the position that *God justifies the ungodly*.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Catholics fought this truth with ruthless vigor. The doctrine of Christ's substitutionary work demands it. (He was treated as if He were a sinner.) The doctrine of imputed righteousness demands it. (The sinner is treated as if he were the One who lived that sinless life and died on the cross.)

Calvin explains:

*For if righteousness consists in the observance of the law, who will deny that Christ merited favor for us when, by taking that burden upon himself, he reconciled us to God as if all had kept the law.— (Calvin, 1536; 1936, Bk. 2, chap. 17, sec. 5.*

*We define justification as follows: the sinner received into communion with Christ, is reconciled to God by his grace. While cleansed by Christ's blood, he obtains forgiveness of sins, and clothed with Christ's righteousness as if it were his own he stands confident before the heavenly judgment seat. —(Calvin, 1536; 1936, Bk. 3, chap. 17, sec. 8.)*

Thus, Roman Catholics *subordinated justification to sanctification*; i.e. making justification dependent on living out a life of holiness or “being born again” or being regenerated. When salvation is contingent on being “born again,” we place regeneration before justification. If justification is dependent on “change” and “sanctification,” the question becomes, “*How sanctified do you have to become before you are accepted in God’s eyes?*”

## LEGALISM V. IMPUTATION

**Legalism** believes people need to pray that Jesus will come into their heart so that He can help them change enough to satisfy God.

**Roman Catholicism** holds to the following ideas of infusion:

- That God regenerates the man, then justifies the man.
- That God changes the man, then justifies the man.
- That God infuses righteousness into man, then justifies the one who believes God.
- That God places righteousness in the heart, then justifies the man.
- That God changes the heart (regenerates it) then justifies the man. The focus here is on inner healing, peace, and power.
- That God “makes a man born again” (have a change of heart) so He can justify man.
- That God regenerates the man by His Spirit then justifies the man.
- That God places faith in the heart and then justifies the man.
- That God looks for some ground, some reality, some virtue, some change, some substance, some goodness within the believer that provides a legal basis for justification.

- That God justifies a man on the final day of his life based on how he has responded to his probation period in Christ.
- That God places Christ within the heart of the sinner to empower the sinner to be holy so He can justify the sinner. Thus, the Roman Catholic believes you need Jesus in your heart; and, if Jesus is in your heart, you can now produce the good works necessary for God to justify you.
- That God makes a man good then pronounces him good.

But, Paul taught that “God justifies the wicked” (Romans 4:5); that is, God declares the sinner righteous by imputing Christ’s righteousness to His account (justification) by faith, then He changes the man (sanctification) by man’s obedience.

The most important principle in life is not the believer’s relationship to God, **but Christ’s relationship to God!** The believer is accepted because Christ was accepted. We are loved because He was the “Beloved.”

Furthermore, how could a righteous Christ die for sins unless sins were imputed to Him? Because sin was imputed to Him, His righteousness can be imputed to us. **He was treated as a sinner at the cross so we might be treated as righteous at the throne!**

*Imputation changes one’s status; but it does **not** change one’s character.* When sin was imputed to Christ, sin did **not** change his constitution, but it did change his status in eyes of the Judge; likewise, when the believer is imputed righteous, *his status changes* in the eyes of the Judge. But, this does **not** mean his constitution changed.

**Justification** changes a man’s standing in the court because of Christ’s imputation; **Sanctification** changes a man’s constitution because of the work of the Holy Spirit. We must keep the two separate. While there is a union between justification and sanctification there is not a fusion of the two.

But, Paul taught that “*God justifies the wicked*” (Romans 4:5); that is, God declares the sinner righteous by imputing Christ’s righteousness to His account (justification) by faith, then He changes the man (sanctification) by man’s obedience.

The most important principle in life is not the believer’s relationship to God, *but Christ’s relationship to God!* The believer is accepted because Christ was accepted. We are loved because He was the “Beloved.”

Furthermore, *how could a righteous Christ die for sins unless sins were imputed to Him?* Because sin was imputed to Him, His righteousness can be imputed to us. He was treated as a sinner at the cross so we might be treated as righteous at the throne!

Imputation changes one’s status; but it does **not** change one’s character. When sin was imputed to Christ, sin did **not** change his constitution, but it did change his status in eyes of the Judge; likewise, when the believer is imputed righteous, his status changes in the eyes of the Judge. But, this does **not** mean his constitution has changed. *Justification* changes a man’s *standing* in the court because of Christ’s imputation; *Sanctification* changes a man’s *constitution* because of the work of the Holy Spirit.

We must keep the two separate. While there is a *union* between *justification* and *sanctification* there is *not a fusion* of the two.

## SOLA FIDE

Berkouwer identifies the error of Catholicism:

*it is wrong to charge Roman Catholics with teaching that a sinner can merit salvation by his own works. Responsible Catholics affirm that salvation is due to the work of God's grace. On the other hand, Catholics do not gain anything when they distort the real Protestant position. As Berkouwer says, "The ancient feud of Rome with the sola fide doctrine, based as it is on the view that sola fide is subversive to sanctification, must be called Rome's most fundamental error." — Berkouwer, Faith and Sanctification, p. 14. (Pinpointing the Issues in the Conflict with Rome, 1975 )*

Thus, what Catholics mean by faith and what the Reformers mean by faith are two different doctrines. Thus, the voice of the Reformers echo through the ages, "Sola Fide!"

- *Sola Scriptura*, *Sola Gracia*, and *Sola Fide* is the foundation of the Reformed faith. Here, we must try to understand the doctrine of faith. What is faith?
- Sola fide (Faith alone) is the confident assurance that God has done all that is necessary for man to be saved in and through the work of Christ on the cross. It is opposed to human effort, human works, and human merit.
- Sola Fide is a view, a look, an object of confidence. Sola Fide is like the snake-bitten Israelites who were instructed to take their eyes off the snakes, off their wounds, off their snake bite medicine and LOOK toward the bronze serpent in the middle of the camp. Those who obeyed were healed because of their focus on the locus of their hope which was not on self, but upon Another.
- Sola fide does not mean that faith is a substitute for righteousness; that faith is a virtue that God sees in the sinner; that faith is something within the heart of man that pleases God.
- Sola fide is a confession that the sinner's acceptance with God has been accomplished by God Himself in the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ.
- Sola fide is a confession that Christ himself, in our name and our behalf, met all our obligations before the bar of eternal justice. All man's efforts, works, and accomplishments are as "filthy rags" and are barred as evidence in the case of Christ's death for mankind. Martin Luther and Calvin could say,
- Mine are Christ's living, doing, and speaking, his suffering and dying, mine as much as if I had lived, done, spoken, suffered, and died as he did (Luther, Luther's Works, American ed., 1955, p. 297)
- For if righteousness consists in the observance of the law, who will deny that Christ merited favor for us when, by taking that burden upon himself, he reconciled us to God as if all had kept the law (Calvin, 1536; 1936, Bk. 2, chap. 17, sec. 5).
- Sola fide is a confession that God's saving faith has been done completely outside the sinner's own experience. Faith looks outside of self to the cross where salvation was won by a mighty victory in which the believing-sinner shares benefits of His thunderous accomplishments.

- Sola fide is a confession that Christ has done all that is necessary for the believer's justification. But, it does not mean that Christ has done it all for sanctification or that there is nothing else for man to do. Faith puts man to work, not for salvation, but because the powers of salvation energize the man to love and to serve (Ephesians 2:10).
- Sola fide is a confession that the righteousness that God provides (His righteousness) is unseen by human eye, but that it is seen by God Himself (Hebrews 11:1). Justification is grasped by faith. It is not seen nor felt. It is discerned with the eye of faith.
- Sola *fide* is a confession of who Christ is (Lord and Savior) and who man is (a sinner condemned).

## **THE REFORMATION AND THE COUNSEL OF TRENT**

- Rome taught justification was *based* on regeneration. The Reformers taught that justification bears the fruit of a regenerated life in justification (Present Truth, October, 1975).
- Rome condemned Reformation theology for its emphasis on external justification. The Reformers opposed the Council of Trent for reducing God's infinite justifying grace to a dimension of an intrahuman experience.
- Rome proposed justification as something that transforms the human heart -- sanctifying grace. Reformers placed the emphasis on extrinsic grace and God's work outside of man at the cross.
- Rome emphasized Christ's work in us: the Reformers emphasized Christ's interceding work for us.
- Rome contended for God's work of grace in man; the Reformers stood for grace in Jesus Christ.
- Rome saw justification as the work of God's grace in us—a regenerating, renewing act within man. The work of the Holy Spirit became the formal cause, or ground of acceptance with God. The Reformers saw the sole ground of acceptance with God as based on what Christ (not the Holy Spirit) did for us (not in us) at Calvary (Present Truth Magazine, October, 1975, p. 42).
- Rome's position fueled the fires of guilt and made every man a slave to external forms of religion; The Reformers gave men rest and set them free to serve God graciously.

Charles Spurgeon (Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth):

*Let the knife penetrate between the joints of the work of Christ for us, and the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Justification, by which the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, is one blessing; sanctification, by which we ourselves are made personally righteous, is another blessing (Pinpointing the Issues in the Conflict with Rome, 1975 ).*

## **JUSTIFICATION V. SANCTIFICATION**

| SUBJECT    | JUSTIFICATION                                  | SANCTIFICATION                               |
|------------|--|--|
| Need       | A right standing with God as Judge (cleansing) | A walk of righteousness with God as a Father |
| Category   | A legal term                                   | A religious term                             |
| Time       | Eschatological (futuristic)                    | Temporal (This life)                         |
| Nature     | Judicial (legal rights)                        | Esthetic (beautifies us)                     |
| Meaning    | To declare righteous                           | To be make righteous                         |
| Necessity  | The Obedience of Christ                        | Man's obedience                              |
| Agent      | Christ   | Spirit                                       |
| Basis      | Substitution                                   | Participation                                |
| Qualifies  | The believer for heaven                        | A believer for service                       |
| Guarantees | Eternal relationship                           | Present fellowship                           |
| Means      | By Faith                                       | By obedience                                 |
| Cleansing  | By blood                                       | By the Word of God                           |
| Result     | Peace with God                                 | Peace of God                                 |

### **THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST AND JUSTIFICATION**

The work of Christ is finished, completed, and fulfilled. It is an accomplished work in history.

Justification happens when men hear the gospel and believe (Acts 13:39; 15:7). The work of sanctification begins when one is born again but is always unfinished and incomplete in time.

Justification contains sanctification as opposed to the Catholic doctrine that sanctification contains justification. Justification is *objective*; sanctification is *subjective*. It is faith in the finished work of Christ that justifies the man rather than the man's faithfulness in the struggle to be sanctified.

God calls for faith, and faith sets its eyes upon God's work outside of man at the cross rather than setting his eyes upon the unfinished work of the Holy Spirit within the heart of man.

The word *believe* in Acts 15:7 is translated in the aorist tense indicating that justification is not piecemeal, but completed action. The believer must learn to accept justification at every moment of his Christian life—during bad days as well as good days.

In Acts 13:39 the word *believe* (pisteuo) is in the present tense. It should be read, "*all that believe and keep on believing are justified from all things.*" Mark the present active participle (*the one believing*) and the present passive indicative verb (*are being justified*).

Acts 13:39 evn tou,tw| pa/j o` pisteu,wn dikaïou/tai

**Lutheran Confessions** regard justification as a present continuous need of the believer, who always remains a sinner in his own eyes yet always grasping the justifying verdict of God by faith in Christ's righteousness (*Protestants in Crisis over Justification by Faith*).

In the **Armenian doctrine**, justification only deals with sins up until the time of conversion. In this framework it is almost impossible to keep justification in perspective since a past act does not remain the believer's greatest need. Justification becomes like a filling station that is passed but once. In this scheme, sanctification often appears like a higher stage in the soteriological process. Final justification on the Day of Judgment tends to rest on sanctification—how good have you really been?

In the Armenian position, justification once again becomes subject to sanctification. In contrast to these two positions, the Lutheran Confessions regard justification as a present continuous need of the believer who is always a sinner in his own eyes yet always grasping the justifying verdict of God by faith in Christ's righteousness (*Protestants in Crisis over Justification by Faith*).

## JUSTIFICATION AND ESCHATOLOGY

Justification looks in **two directions**: *back* at the cross at the finished work of Christ and *forward* to the eschatological judgment. Justification is not a finished work. If it were, there would be no need of an eschatological judgment. The believer can rest assured of what the verdict will be because God's verdict towards believers is thrust into the present to be enjoyed now in advance of the Final Judgment. Keep in mind ***justification belongs to the age to come*** and that the kingdom entered history in and through the ministry of Christ to bring the blessings of the kingdom in a first fruits way for man to enjoy now in advance of the eschatological judgment at the consummation of history.

## WEAKENED JUSTIFICATION

- One weakens justification if one fails to keep justification at the center of his theology.



- One weakens justification if one totally disconnects justification from sanctification.
- One weakens justification if one fails to separate the work of Christ from the work of the Holy Spirit.
- One weakens justification if one easily retreats to internal grace as the basis of justification; i.e. making justification dependent on the degree of change in the human heart. If this be the case, we must ask: "How much change is necessary to be justified?"
- One weakens justification if one pursues present experiences (second blessings) to confirm his acceptance; i.e. dynamic, sensual, spiritual experiences form the foundation of justification rather than the finished work of the cross.
- One weakens justification if one holds that faith for a moment brings life for eternity.
- One can confuse forgiveness with justification (Acts 13:38-39). Forgiveness is needed on a daily basis; justification is a constant state from which one operates and functions in his Christian life. We pray daily for forgiveness, but we rest daily in our justification -- that is, our legal standing and right to pray.
- One weakens justification when he mixes it with sanctification or makes justification dependent on the progress of sanctification.
- One weakens justification when human performance becomes more important than the performance of Christ on behalf of the sinner.

## JUSTIFICATION AND COUNSELING

Depressed Christians flock to counselors because they feel bad about who they are and what they have done. These humanistic counselors mitigate these feelings by assuring the patient that his experience are no better or no worse than other people's experiences — *but few take their client to the cross.*

It is an error to make introspection of self the remedy to problems rather than inspection of the cross as the remedy for the snake-bitten sinner. Man does not need more self-esteem. He needs more Christ-esteem. Common among psychologists is the view that the depressed must forgive himself. Sin is rebellion against God and only God can forgive sin. Nowhere in Scripture are Christians commanded to forgive themselves. This is pride . . . an act of a god.

One of the basic problems that plague the human heart is the tremendous sense of guilt one has from breaking God's law. *Guilt* is the *feeling* that one deserves to be punished, judged, and condemned; that they are less than what God intends man to be. But, guilt can be more than a feeling.

True guilt is the fact that a sinner has sinned and will be punished at the judgment. It is the counselor's job to deal with guilt biblically. That is, the counselor must help the one plagued by guilt to understand his true condemnation in God's sight. He must help the counselee understand that God has taken his sin to Calvary and credited his sin to Christ, and that God has taken the righteousness of Christ and credited it to his account.

**Q:** How can one remain depressed when he understands our Lord's work on the cross and his justification in Christ?

The key to guilt is (a) understanding the concept of justification, and (b) to help the individual draw sufficient comfort from the finished work of Christ on his behalf. Digging around in the graveyard of subjective feelings is only a few feet away from emotional hell. To view man's bad feelings as the result of low self-esteem or the result of victimization is a gross, twisted product of the *psychologization* of our culture and should not be tolerated by men who understand the gospel.

### **WHAT BELIEVING SOULS REALIZE**

- They know that God loves them not because of what they do, but because of who God is—a God of love. Likewise, He commands them to love, not because other people are lovely, but because of who they are and what they are becoming—people of love.
- They do not seek to be more worthy in order to be loved, but consent to being loved though they are unworthy.
- They have stopped trying to be good in order to be accepted because they know they are accepted because Christ was good.
- They have stopped trying to gain acceptance by their performance because they know they have acceptance because of the performance of Christ.
- They no longer blame themselves because Christ took all their blame upon Himself.
- They no longer determine their potential based on their past because they know their potential is based on their position in Christ in the present. They are not products of their past, but of their faith in what Christ has accomplished for them.
- They have no shame about their past, because they are too occupied with the glory of the present.
- They overcome defeat because they realize God will not withdraw His favor because of their failure. Victory is rarely final and failure is not fatal.
- They have a powerful prayer life for God because they understand they already have a right standing with God.
- They serve Christ, not to be blessed, but because they are already blessed.
- They do not strive to accomplish great things by being more devoted to Christ, but they accomplish great things because they are more believing in Christ. Discouragement comes, not because of a failure of devotion, but because of a failure to believe. The presence of faith is the victory that overcomes . . . (1 John 5:4).
- They overcome discouragement, not by trying to be the best before men, but by rejoicing that Christ was the best among men before God.

- They do not dig around in the graveyard of their past to find reasons God should accept them; Rather, they dig into God's word to discover the wealth and riches of Christ's accomplishments on their behalf.
- They do not do archaeological journeys into their past to find blame points for present behavior; Rather, they understand that present failures are the result of doubt about the wonder of Christ's accomplishments at Calvary on their behalf; i.e. failure to see one's self in Christ and to claim the benefits of Christ's history is far more serious than moral defeats.
- They realize that faith is the key to enjoyment of the blessings of the gospel, that doubt is the mother of all evils.
- They realize that faith in the victory of Christ brings peace to the soul and joy to the heart; and, that a focus on one's personal success or lack thereof yields nothing but pride and depression.
- They realize that past failure is an opportunity to rejoice in the Victory of Christ because our hope is not in how much we change, but how much Christ obeyed God's law on our behalf.
- They realize that any counseling that takes a person in and in and in is a Hindu Pelagian model and must be rejected; that God's counselors take a man outside of himself, to Calvary, to show him the wonderful works of Another.

## 51. THE BLESSING OF FORGIVENESS

Q: What is the extent of God's forgiveness, and on what basis does He forgive?

### THE ORIGIN OF FORGIVENESS

No matter how sinful and depraved you are, there is good news: God forgives sins! But, forgiveness is not obtained because you pray. Forgiveness is possible only because of the gospel.

*Psalm 130:4 But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*

*Luke 24:47 "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."*

*Acts 13:38 "Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this Man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you."*

Forgiveness is **not** a pagan concept. Ancient religions were legalistic and taxing. Total devotion was expected, and failure of devotion was a hideous crime against the deity—and, treason to the god-State. Forgiveness was tenuous and uncertain. But forgiveness is a cornerstone in the worship of YHWH. YHWH was so forgiving, He left himself open to the charge of being soft on sin. This was Jonah's complaint (Jonah 4). Israel's God forgave the wicked Assyrians and stayed His judgment against them.

But, the possibility of forgiveness in church history was not as liberal as modern day permissive theology. In the second and third centuries, Christians paid dearly for their faith. Martyrdom was not only possible, but probable under radical pagan Roman regimes. Rome offered immunity to Christians who would recant and worship the Roman gods. Many timid souls capitulated and were excommunicated from the church. Bishops who were imprisoned for their faith and who suffered for Christ, had little tolerance for wimpy Christians. In many churches in the empire, bishops taught that there was no forgiveness for those who refused to die for Christ. But, not all adopted this extreme position. Over time, bishops combined flexibility and uncompromising adherence to the faith advancing the belief that sins committed after baptism could be forgiven if entered into with sincerity and repentance. Thus, the triumph of forgiveness over the dominion of human weakness emerged in the Apostle's Creed:

"*I believe . . . in the forgiveness of sins*" is **no** minor doctrine, but a development within the progress of the gospel.

## **THE WORDS OF FORGIVENESS**

*Nasa'* (naw-saw') or *nacah*: The first usage is found in Genesis 50:17. In the Qal form it means to lift, lift up, to bear, carry, support, sustain, endure, to take, take away, to carry off, and to forgive.

*Psalm. 25:18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive (nasa) all my sins.*

*Exodus 10:17 Now therefore forgive (nasa), I pray thee, my sin only this once, and entreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only.*

*Salach* (xl;s, saw-lakh') means *to forgive* or *to pardon*; (Qal) to forgive, pardon; (Niph) to be forgiven. In Numbers 30:12, the Lord "released" (*salach*) a woman from a vow if her husband was not aware of it. *Salach* implies complete and total release from debt while not mitigating guilt (2 Chronicles 7:14).

*Kaphar* (kaw-far') a primitive root expressing "to cover with pitch, purge, to make an atonement, to make reconciliation, to pacify, to propitiate; to cover over" (See Psalm 78:38-Kapar is in the Piel form.).

*Jeremiah 18:23 Yet, LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay (me): forgive (kaphar) **not** their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee; deal (thus) with them in the time of thine anger.*

*Kaphar* means *to wipe out* (Qal), *to blot out*, *to obliterate*, or *to exterminate* or "to cover." It is the same word used in God's instructions to Noah to cover the ark with pitch (Genesis 6:14). God is such a forgiving God, that in Jeremiah 18:23, *the prophet* has to pray that YHWH might **not** forgive or "blot out" the sins of those seeking to murder him. *Jonah*, knowing that YHWH was such a forgiving, compassionate God, resigned his prophetic calling fearing that God might show mercy on his fierce enemies, the Ninevites. And, when God pardoned the Ninevites, righteous, vindictive Jonah plunged into the pit of despair. Like Niagara Falls, forgiveness flows from His throne of grace on the rocky shores of humanity.

*Aphiemi* (Greek): This word is used more than any other to represent forgiveness. It is used as a noun fifteen times (15) times and as a verb forty (40) times. It literally means "to send away" (Romans 4:5-6).

We see this in the tradition at Yom Kippur regarding the sending away of the scapegoat—a picture of God putting away sin from His presence. When God forgives sin, he sends it away.

*Isaiah 38:17 Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.*

This metaphor communicates our sins are put “out of sight.”

*Micah 7:19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.*

This metaphor suggest that sins are put out of sight and out of reach -- a kind of “No Fishing” sign posted on the shore line.

*Hebrews 10:17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

A second meaning of *apheimi* is “to cancel a debt.” See Matthew 18:27 -- .” . . and forgave (avfh/ken) him the debt.”

*Apoluo* (Greek) means “to put away.” It is formed by two words: “*apo*” meaning “from” and “*luo*” meaning “to loose.” It is the same word used for “divorce” in Matthew 5:31. The idea behind this word is that God divorces our sin from our relationship with Him. In Colossians 1:13, 14, *redemption* (accusative) is identified as an act of forgiveness, the release from a debt.

*Paresis* (Greek) means “remission” (Romans 3:25). In OT times, God “passed over” sins; that is, He did not punish all sins immediately. This “passing over” of sins left God open to the charge He was too tolerant of sin. Though for a time, God “passed over” sin, He did not ignore it!! At the cross, however, the debt became due. At Calvary, He put away sin in such a way as to no longer hold repentant men responsible for it. God did not ignore sin. He punished it. At the cross the debt was demanded . . . and THE PRICE WAS PAID!!

*Charizomai* (Greek) is the word for “grace.” It infers unconditional favor or merit (Colossians 2:13). *Charozomai* points to the nature of forgiveness: i.e. forgiveness is a gracious, kind gift from God. ***Forgiveness comes to those who are unworthy, but it does not come to those who are unrepentant.***

## THE BASIS OF FORGIVENESS

Is sincere and genuine prayer the basis of forgiveness?

The *basis of forgiveness* is **not** grace. Grace is the motivation. The basis of forgiveness is **not** omnipotence because God’s righteousness rules over His omnipotence. **The basis of forgiveness is not sincere prayer.** God cannot just forgive sin by issuing an executive order saying, “I forgive you.” He is bound by His promise to judge sin (Exodus 34:7; Ezekiel 18:3). If God could just forgive sin when men pray and ask for forgiveness because He is gracious and omnipotent, *then there would be no need to send His Son to die on Calvary.*

Because He could **not** ignore sin that He sent the Savior to bear our sin at the cross. It was because God was holy that sin was punished at Calvary.

*The basis of forgiveness is the shed blood of Christ which satisfied the claims of a holy God.* There was no other way to pay for sin. Furthermore, there is no forgiveness apart from the death of Christ and faith in Him. Those who think that God forgive them because they ask him in prayer without embracing the cross are sadly deceived. A “Hail Mary” prayer to an unknown God cannot secure forgiveness. A man must come to Christ.

## **CONDITIONS OF FORGIVENESS**

**Faith in Christ** (Romans 3:25): The act of faith brings one in contact with the blood resulting in forgiveness. Actually, it is faith in the “faithfulness” of Christ that binds forgiveness. It is **not** faith in our prayer that guarantees forgiveness, but *faith in the doing and dying of Christ that secures forgiveness.*

## **REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS (Luke 24:47):**

Here, the purpose of repentance is the acquisition of forgiveness.

Faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin: Faith is towards Christ; repentance is towards sin. Faith sees what Christ has done on the cross for sinners; repentance sees what sin has done to God. Faith turns to Christ as Savior; Repentance turns away from sin to righteousness. Just as it is impossible to walk north without walking away from south, it is impossible to have faith in God's forgiveness without repenting of sin.

## **CANCELLATION OF SINS**

Forgiveness is possible because Christ took the handwriting of the ordinance against us nailing it to the cross (Colossians 2:14). In Roman times, the accused had to be presented with an indictment, a list of charges against him. If the man was found guilty, the indictment was posted above his cell. When released, the judge would stamp “cancelled” on the indictment meaning that his crime had been paid in full. Upon his release, the man would go home and post the document above his door. If any asked why he was no longer in jail, he would point to the word “cancelled” on the indictment.

Likewise, our Lord took the indictment, the list of charges against us, and nailed it to the cross. Shortly before He died, he said, “*It is finished*” (tete,lesta), i.e. “*It is cancelled.*” The debt was demanded, and the price was paid!

## **CONDITIONS OF FORGIVENESS FOR BELIEVERS**

**Confession of sin** (Psalm 32:5; Psalm 51:3; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9): A concern to all of us is how do we gain forgiveness of sins after one becomes a Christian; i.e. what do we do to obtain forgiveness if we sin after our conversion to Christ?

**The Catholic answer** is go to confession and take the sacraments. **The Armenian answer** is “baptism of the holy Ghost” which allegedly results in immediate, total sanctification. **The humanist answer** is forgive yourself. The “guilt ridden” man may punish himself. Shame is a terrible taskmaster. But, the Biblical man claims his standing in Christ and confesses known sin.

*1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

When a Christian sins, his enjoyment of the Father may change drastically, his standing does not change; Guilt can send a man spiraling into deep subjectivity and even depression. The key is to activate faith and drive out doubt—faith in the doing and dying of Christ. The believer's justification does not change, but his fellowship with God can be dramatically affected. Furthermore, John informs us that confession of our sins results in immediate forgiveness; that is, forgiveness is a matter of confession and claiming our justification by faith.

The text does not say we are to confess our sins before a priest or before man. Sins must be named before the throne if they are to be forgiven. General confessions of sinfulness and misconduct fall short of Biblical confession. Confession involves honest specificity; i.e. the listing of specific sins by name. Confession is not penance; it is an honest admission of failure before the throne. Confession is not begging God to forgive. It is a humble assurance that this debt to God has already been paid for by Christ at the cross. But, to be enjoyed, forgiveness must be claimed by faith and believed.

In some instances, when our sins impact others, we must first confess our sins to the ones we offend; and, then go to Christ and confess our sins (See Luke 17:1ff). In confessing our sins to the ones we hurt is an act of repentance received by God enabling Him to restore our fellowship with Him. Remember, sin after conversion is not an issues of standing, but an issue of relationship—of fellowship with the Father.

**Forgiveness of others** (Matthew 6:14-15: Luke 17:1-4): A person who cannot forgive others of their sins has a shallow view of their own sin and its offensiveness to a holy God. The one release from the tonnage of one's own guilt will not have any difficulty forgiving ounces of infractions of those who sin against him.

**1 John 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:**

**1 John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.**

People manage guilt in different ways. Some deny they have sinned, others beat themselves up with a guilt stick to atone for their sins. Neither pleases the Father. Rather, God wants us to understand the advocacy of our Lord in heaven on our behalf.

## **REMEMBER OUR ADVOCATE**

The Apostle John, up in age, pens his masterpiece so we might live a holy life free from sin and its taxing weight on our soul.

The presence of active sin in our lives burdens the soul and prevents us from enjoying fellowship with God and his people.

While it is not right to sin, and though sin interferes with God's purpose for our lives, the apostle doesn't want us to be unduly pained by sins committed after our conversion or to give into despair.

When we feel the consciousness of guilt, John wants us to know that we have an Advocate with the Father that intercedes for us in heaven; that not only does God forgive sins before our conversion, but forgives sins committed after our baptism.

We have a righteous Advocate at His side who pleads our cause before Him. He died for our sins once and now intercedes for us at the right hand of God. When we sin our High Priest pleads the efficiency of His work at Calvary.

Christians know the joy of walking with God, and when we sin on life's journey, it is human to feel the guilt and shame of our transgressions.

But, John doesn't want his children to be unduly concerned about sin, not because sin is harmless, but because we have an Advocate representing our cause before the Father.

The word "Advocate" comes from the Greek word "*paracletos*" which refers to a mediator or counselor that has access before the bar of heaven.

When we sin, our Advocate does not deny our sin or conceal our shortfalls. He makes no apology for it. He admits sin is sin and that we are liable. But, . . .

When we sin, our Advocate pleads His accomplishments at the cross proving to our Father that there is no claim against us upon which reprimand can be granted because He was punished for our sins once for all at Calvary; that His passion fully satisfies the demands of His justice (propitiation); that God credits His righteousness and obedience to the law to our account (Romans 4).

In forgiving our sins, God is not robbed of justice because the debt has been fully discharged by the precious blood of Christ, the currency of the spirit world ([1 John 1:7](#)); and,

- in forgiving our sins, the holiness of God is not compromised because Christ satisfied the divine claims of justice at the cross through His propitiatory sacrifice; and,
- in forgiving our sins no harm comes to the world; and,
- in forgiving sins we are better for it; and,
- in forgiving sins we are more prone to seek Him in a spirit of thankfulness and humility than if we are filled with fear of divine punishment; and,
- in forgiving our sins we are empowered to serve our God with "joyfulness and gladness of heart" which debtors are not able to do (Deuteronomy 28:47); and,
- in forgiving our sins it is better to have men set free from their debts to love their neighbors than to sentence them to a damp dungeon of guilt to flog themselves all their lives for their failures; and,



- in forgiving our sins the glories of grace triumph over the cries of the conscience; and,
- in forgiving our sins we are able to boldly serve the Lord and take risks to accomplish great things for Him knowing that if we fail, we can ***not*** outspend the grace of God.

*Hebrews 13:6 So that we may **boldly** say, The Lord is my helper, and **I will not fear** what man shall do unto me.*

When we sin, our Advocate's nail-pierced hands are a claim with proof of claim that He paid for our sin.

The kingdom of God is not advanced by saints flailing themselves for their failings. It is glorious, however, when men are glad for grace.

The world is a better place with men enjoying His love than with Christian people being burdened down with despair over their defeats.

Therefore, let us lift up our drooping eyes and downcast spirit, acknowledge our sin, and claim by faith the benefits of our Savior's accomplishments at the cross that satisfied the divine claims of holiness (propitiation), that cleanses our soul, and keeps on cleansing, and cleansing, and cleansing.

Note the present tense in 1 John 1:7:

***1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have (present, active, indicative) fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses and keeps on cleansing (present, active, indicative) us from all sin.***

*"What can wash away my sin?  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;  
What can make me whole again?  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
Oh! precious is the flow  
That makes me white as snow;  
No other fount I know,  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus."*

*"There is power, power, wonder working power  
In the blood of the Lamb;  
There is power, power, wonder working power  
In the precious blood of the Lamb.  
There is power, power, wonder working power  
In the blood of the Lamb;  
There is power, power, wonder working power  
In the precious blood of the Lamb."*

## **THE ADVOCATE AND HIS WORK OF PROPITIATION**

***1 John 1:1-2:2 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.***

John introduces us to Christ in three ways: (1) as the “Word of Life” having proof of claim (1:1-4); (2) The One Who cleanses us from all sin before the Light by his blood – the currency of the Spirit world, and (3) the Advocate who provides a remedy for human failure by virtue of His work of propitiation and advocacy before the Father.

John refers to Christians as “*little children*” six times in His letter – as an expression of his tender fatherly love for his readers. (2:12; 2:28; 3:18; 4:4; 5:21).

***“these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.”***

**First**, John teaches us that believers must not sin. In John’s mind, there is no other way to live than to not sin! In 1 John, the duty to love replaces slavery to sin.

**Second:** “*And if any man sin*” is a third class conditional clause (subjunctive) holding out the possibility that a man might not sin. Sin is **not** a fact to this apostle. That men would sin is inconceivable to him . . . but he also knows there is a possibility his “little children” may sin.

**Third**, John wants us to know: “*if any man sin, believers have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*” The verb “*have*” is an indicative – a statement of fact; of certainty; and, of assurance. Unfortunately his “*little children*” do sin; and, the aged Apostle wants them to know there is comfort for them when they “*fall short of the glory of God.*”

That comfort is found in the advocacy of “*Jesus Christ the righteous.*” The fact that He is righteous implies the Judge accepts His presence and intercessory ministry in His holy courtroom. His “*little children*” do not have a scroungy, drunken, two-bit lawyer advocating their case, but “*Jesus Christ the righteous.*”

The word “*Advocate*” (*paracletos*) is translated “*comforter*” four times in John’s gospel (14:16; 14:25; 15:26; 16:17).

It has two meanings. **First**, the term *paracletos* refers One who *comforts* others during times of stress; and **Second** it refers to a Greek *lawyer* who advocates for those charged with a crime.

In 1 John, John presents the Father as perfect light, pure and holy; and, His tender Son as a merciful Champion before the Supreme “BAR” pleading the case of His children if they transgress His law. This comfort is made possible due to our Lord's propitiatory work on the cross.

The word “*propitiation*” (*hilasmos*) refers to the “*mercy seat*” on the Altar of Testimony (Exodus 40:5; Revelation 6:9). It is often insufficiently translated “*atonement.*” The idea behind the word “*propitiation*” is that **Christ satisfied the claims of holiness against sin by paying for the sins of His children with his own blood – the currency of the spirit world;** that is, **Christ is the mercy seat** with blood on the altar that “*cleanses us from all sin*” (1:7).

Christians should not sin, but if they do their Advocate steps forward to remind them that they are still accepted as His beloved children due to His propitiatory work at Calvary. So effective is Christ’s blood at

cleansing his “little children” from sin John adds, “*not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*”

Moreover, the power of the blood is so potent that it goes to work cleansing the conscience following honest confession:

*1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

If believers listen to the drum-pounding voices of “guilty” in their conscience or sulk over their sin, they dis-credit the advocacy of “*Jesus Christ, the righteous.*”

The message here is to think higher and better about our Advocate and the power of His blood. *There is no greater need for Christians than to see the Supremacy and Majesty of their heavenly Advocate, the Lord Jesus the righteous.* His work on the cross is more effective and more comforting than any of can fully fathom. Faith in His blood silences the siren going off in our conscience; that is, faith in the power of His blood comforts the conscience and gives it peace.

## **THE UNPARDONABLE SIN**

Blasphemy is the unforgivable sin:

***Matthew 12:31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.***

Blasphemy is **not** a slip of the tongue, but a settled persuasion regarding the origin of Jesus.

I once heard a man call Mary a whore . . . and he meant it! In his own mind, he could not accept the immaculate conception of Jesus. This is blasphemy. Jesus declared He who was not with Him scatters. But what did Jesus mean by “*with Him*” (v. 30)? The issue here is the person of Christ, the mode of a man’s service—an evil persuasion about the person of Christ! Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is a studied, adamant conviction that attributes the person and work of Christ to the Devil. It is **not** a “slip of the tongue” or temporary query about Christ that settles for less than He claimed to be. It is **not** a negative statement of one’s honest struggle with the Christian message; **nor** is it an expletive at angry moment; Rather, *it is a firm, settled position that Jesus was illegitimate, a product of the Devil’s work.*

***Matthew 12:24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.***

The Pharisees were lawyers who cross examined the Christ event. They heard Jesus speak. Saw His miracles; and rejected the tangible, visible proof of His Messianic claims. These attorneys of law came to a settled conviction out of their hardened hearts that Jesus was from the Devil. Since Christ is no longer present doing miracles, it is highly unlikely this sin can still be so frequently committed today. However, if one has a firm conviction that Jesus is of the Devil, then that man will perish in his unbelief. Unbelief is unforgiveable.

## **THE SIN UNTO DEATH**

The sin “*not unto death*” appears to be a true sin, but one that is not disciplined so severely that God takes the man home (1 John 5:15). The sin “*unto death*” is **not** defined. It appears, however, to be a sin that is so offensive to God that He is forced to discipline the sinner by corporal punishment. The sin of Ananias and Saphirra was of this sort (Acts 5:1ff). See also the sin of Onan in Genesis 38:8-10 as well as sins mentioned in Joshua 24:19.

## **UNFORGIVENESS IN MAN**

In *the Parable of the Debt Collector* (Matthew 18:23ff), the Lord tells the story of a man who was so hopelessly in debt that it was impossible for him to recover. Throwing himself on the mercy of the court, the man's debt was graciously cancelled by the compassionate king. But, because the man never really grasped the fact that his own debt was cancelled, he immediately left the presence of the king menacing those who owed him money. Notice the nature of unforgiveness and the true character of forgiveness from this story:

- Unforgiveness will not give up control. Forgiveness does not seek to control the offender.
- Unforgiveness will not give up its sense of justice. Forgiveness gives up its sense of justice.
- Unforgiveness will not give up its pain (anger). Forgiveness releases others from our anger.
- Unforgiveness will not give up the right to revenge and judgment. Forgiveness defers justice to God only.
- Unforgiveness will not release others from debts. Forgiveness cancels personal debts.

## **THE HIGH COST OF FORGIVENESS**

From this same parable, we should notice the High Cost of Unforgiveness. Forgiveness is expensive! No one can afford the interest on the unpaid debt by unforgiveness, **NOBODY!**

- Unforgiveness stressed out the man emotionally.
- Unforgiveness distressed his debtors
- Unforgiveness distressed the king's servants
- Unforgiveness distressed the king.
- Unforgiveness resulted in more stress in prison (a life sentence).

The real lesson in this account is the fact that *forgiveness is very, very expensive*. Because God willingly paid the cost for sin, the death of His only Son, men are released from their debt to God. This wonder should so captivate the heart, that forgiveness should be a crown jewel among those who have beheld the

brilliance of God's forgiveness. And, if a man cannot forgive a repentant sinner who sincerely seeks his forgiveness for a wrong done, what does that tell you about his understanding of God's forgiveness.

It is good news that God forgives sins, not because we pray, but because He sent His only Son into the world to pay for our sins. Because the DEBT WAS DEMANDED, AND THE PRICE WAS PAID, forgiveness is available to men through faith in Christ!!

## 52. THE BLESSING OF REGENERATION

**Q:** What does the word *regeneration* mean, and what is its relationship to the *kingdom of God*? What does the phrase "*born again*" mean, and to what does it refer: the body, the soul, or the human spirit?

*Matthew 19:28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

*Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

### THE HUMAN PROBLEM

*Shame* is a human problem and God's solution is *regeneration*.

Ezekiel identifies the human problem. Note the words "*profaned*," "*loathed*," "*iniquities*," "*abominations*," and "*ashamed*." One of the consequences of sinful acts is shame. Shame will appear in the human heart when a man of conscience sins. When shame is present, men hide from God and from one another. Shame drives a man into isolation and dampens his relationship with others. The cure for shame is regeneration.

***Ezekiel 36:22 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.***

***Ezekiel 36:23 And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.***

***Ezekiel 36:31 Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations .***

***Ezekiel 36:32. . . be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.***

***Exodus 32:25 And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)***

As a sinner, man commits shameful acts. *Shame* is that painful feeling by men who do something cowardice, lustful, ridiculous, or dishonorable. Shameful acts degrade character and rob men of internal

tranquility. Men respond to shame in different ways. Some harden their heart so they can't hear the voice of shame, others plunge into self-pity and guilt, and others come clean and seek God's solution to shame. How many people have said to themselves, "I am what I am. I cannot change"?

The humanistic solution is that "*You must change by making better choices.*" But, this is easier said than done. In reality, people love their sin. They are slaves to sin. They may learn to mask their sin better, but they have difficulty changing what they are. Usually, people live two lives: a respectable public life (reform), and a private life full of hidden lusts.

Ezekiel not only identifies the problem, he provides the solution: "

***Ezekiel 36:25-27 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.***

God's solution for shame is regeneration; i.e. a new heart created, energized, and sustained by the Holy Spirit. While the term "*regeneration*" is not in the Ezekiel text, the concept of regeneration is supplied. What was announced in the OT arrives in and is explained in the NT.

*1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.*

*Romans 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

## **MEANING OF THE WORD REGENERATION**

Because we hear about the "*born again*" business man who received a new lease on life, and the baseball player who is said to be "*born again*" after a comeback, and the movie star who was "*born again*" in Tibet, it is easy to be confused about the Biblical meaning of the term. Because Jesus said, "*Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3), it behooves us to understand the meaning correctly.

## **LINGUISTIC INSIGHTS**

There are **five Greek words** connected to the term "*born again*:"

**The first term** "*born again*" (gennhqh/| a;nwqe, *gennthe anatheo*) means "born from above" (John 3:3). This phrase points to the source of this birth.

**The second word** for "*born again*" is the word "*regeneration*" (*paliggenesia*, *paliggenesia*) found in Matthew 19:28 and Titus 3:5. This word is made up of the word "*again*" (*palin*, *palin*) and "*birth*" (*genesis*, *genesis*). In Matthew, the word "*regeneration*" is associated with the Eschaton -- *the Age of Resurrection*. In John's vertical dualism, this birth is from above. In Matthew's linear dualism, regeneration is connected to the kingdom of God.

In Titus, the phrase “*washing of regeneration*” implies that the new birth results in a spiritual cleansing. The word “*washing*” (dia. loutrou/, dia loutrou) is an ablative of agency. The use of the ablative points to a fact of *separation*. In this case, a man is separated from his sins through the new birth.

**The third word** associated with “*born again*” is the word “*renewal*” (avnakainw,sewj, anakainosis) found in Titus 3:5. The word “*renewal*” or “*renewing*” is a genitive noun (source). The Greek word (avnakainwsewj) comes from the word (ana) meaning “*again*” or “*back,*” and the word kainos (kainw,s) meaning “*new*” or “*different.*” The *Agent* of this renewal is the Holy *Spirit* (genitive/source). The Spirit that will regenerate nature and create a new heaven and new earth in the Eschaton is active in history regenerating men and women now.

**The fourth word** for “*born again*” is found in Acts 3:21. The phrase “*times of restitution*” (a;cri cro,nwn avpokatasta,sewj, arche chronon apokatastaseos) is translated “*until the times of restitution.*” The word “*restitution*” is a triple compound word from apo (apo) meaning “*from*” or “*for,*” and kata (kata) meaning “*down from*” or “*according to,*” and istamei (istmimi) meaning “*to set in order.*” The “*times of restitution*” refer to the regenerative acts of the Spirit in the Eschaton, the age to come, the Age of Resurrection, and a.k.a. the *age of Regeneration*.

**The fifth word** for “*born again*” is a perfect, passive participle (2<sup>nd</sup> pl) found in 1 Peter 1:23: “*Having been born again*” (avnagegennhme,no, anagegennameno). It means “*having been born again.*” This participle points to the experience of the new birth, the day the Spirit creates new life in the soul making the believer a new creation. Thus, Christians have experienced the powers of the Eschaton in a first fruits way in advance of the arrival of the Eschaton into history.

### **WHAT REGENERATION IS NOT**

- It isn't a command. There is nothing you can do to be born again. It is a work of the Spirit.
- It doesn't mean easy believism.
- It doesn't mean to start being religious.
- It doesn't refer to water baptism.
- It doesn't refer to personal reform in an area of life.
- It isn't a personal choice or decision made by an individual.
- It doesn't mean a new perspective on life.
- It isn't snapping nor is it a crisis experience.
- It isn't a change in the substance of human nature or rooting out of the sin nature (Manichaeans).
- It isn't a twelve-step self-improvement program.
- It isn't going to church to be inspired.

### **THEOLOGICAL DEFINITIONS OF REGENERATION**

**Hodge** (1992): The subjective change wrought in the soul by the grace of God (p. 433) . . . a 'quickening,' a communication of a new principle of life (p. 435).

**Westminster Confession** (10.1-2): . . . he is pleased . . . enlightening their minds, spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills . . . drawing them to Jesus Christ.

**Thiessen** (1992): From the divine side, the change of heart is called regeneration, the new birth; from the human side, it is called conversion. In regeneration, the soul is passive; in conversion, it is active. Regeneration may be defined as the communication of divine life to the soul (p. 279).

**Berkoff** (1993): Regeneration is not a change in the substance of human nature (Manichaeans) . . . a change in one or more of the faculties of the soul (Rationalists) . . . a perfect change of the whole nature of man (Anabaptists) . . . Regeneration consists in the implanting of the principle of new spiritual life in man, in a radical change of the governing disposition of the soul, which, under the influence of the Holy spirit, gives birth to a life that moves in a Godward direction (p. 468).

## REGENERATION AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The kingdom of God is an age where life reigns, death is nullified, and creation will be regenerated (Isaiah 11, 35, 65, 66 ). Note what is affected by regeneration: desert, bodies, land, animals, Israel, hearts, etc.

*Isaiah 32:15 Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.*

*Isaiah 35:1-2 The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God.*

*Isaiah 35:5-7 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes .*

*Isaiah 44:3 For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants .*

*Isaiah 65:25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.*

*Ezekiel 18:31 Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel?*

*Ezekiel 36:24-25 For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.*



*Ezekiel 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.*

*Ezekiel 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

*Ezekiel 37:1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live,*

The kingdom of God is an age of renewal, the reign of life on Planet Earth. It is an age where all of creation will awaken with life and the earth will once again flourish like a rain forest. Death will be annulled. Thorn and thistles will no longer dominate the land. The Bible calls this age “the kingdom of God,” “the Regeneration,” “the age to come,” and “Eternal life.” It is an age of physical, moral, and spiritual regeneration (Luke 18:18ff).

## **THEOLOGICAL ISSUES SURROUNDING REGENERATION**

Does God regenerate then justify; or does God justify then regenerate? That is, does God change the heart and then declare one right with Himself, or does God declare one right with Himself then change the heart? Is change the basis of justification? If so, how much changed does one have in order to be justified? Does regeneration include a *preconversion* work, or is regeneration narrower than this referring only to the impartation of life into the soul of man? For a detailed analysis and explanation of the issues involved between justification and regeneration see the chapter on justification in this manual.

### **THE THEOLOGY OF REGENERATION**

**Regeneration belongs to the Eschaton**, “*the times of restitution*” (Acts 3:21), and the “*regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory*” (Matthew 19:28). Following the fall of man (Genesis 3), God promised in the *protoevangelium* (3:15) that He would reverse the devastating effects of the fall through the Seed of the woman, the Messiah.

From this day forward, the ancients looked forward to a “*new heaven and a new earth*” (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; Revelation 21-22), to a time when the deserts will blossom with new life (Isaiah 32:15; 35:1-2), to a time when bodies will be regenerated and restored to perfect health (Isaiah 35:5-7), to a time when nature will return to its Edenic balance and harmony (Isaiah 65:25). In the Eschaton men will know God (Isaiah 11; Jeremiah 33:33ff; Ezekiel 36:24-27), and peace will reign (Isaiah 2:1-5). This eschatological hope is called “*the regeneration*,” “*the restoration of all things*,” “*the kingdom of God*,” or the “*age to come*.”

**The Agent of Regeneration is the Spirit of the Eschaton.** Who is going to bring about this eschatological renewal: religious leaders, political leaders, powerful governments? The Agent of this restoration is none other than the Spirit of the Eschaton: “Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest (Isaiah 32:15). The very Spirit who created this heaven and earth (Genesis 1:2) will be the One who will create the “new heaven and new earth” (Revelation 21:1).

Entrance into the Eschaton is by means of resurrection.

*(Luke 20:35ff). And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world (this age: tou/ aivw/noj tou,tou) marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world (age: tou/ aivw/noj), and the resurrection from the dead (th/j avnasta,sew th/j evk nekrw/n), neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection*

“This age,” aeon (aeon), is a period where death dominates man’s existence. But, the age to come is marked by the dominance of eternal life. The river running down main street in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:2), is a symbolic way of informing us of the reign of eternal life in the age to come. Death and all its accompaniments will be abolished because life reigns. Where Christ rules, death cannot reign.

The only way to enter that age is by virtue of the resurrection. The age to come is the age of resurrection, the Age when the wicked will be purged from society and the “worthy” will receive a spiritual body (sw/ma pneumatiko,n, soma pneumatikon), i.e. a body made by the Spirit and fit for the Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:44).

This body will be “imperishable” (15:42), “glorious” (15:43), “powerful” (15:43), “spiritual” (15:43), “Christ-like” (15:48), and “immortal” (15:53).

Just as there are two resurrections, there are two stages to being “born again.” Jesus taught a resurrection of the body and a resurrection of the soul.

***The first resurrection is a spiritual resurrection:*** “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the (spiritually) dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that *hear shall live*” (John 5:25).

Who are the dead? The dead in this passage refers to those who are dead spiritually; i.e. those who are separated from God (Ephesians 2:1). The word “now” (nu/n) is an adverb modifying the verb “is” (estivn). Those who hear and believe the gospel of the kingdom receive the spiritual life of the kingdom now. Possession of this life is called *a resurrection* because the spiritually dead receive eternal life when they trust Christ. This is what John had in mind when he said, “*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection*” (Revelation 20:5).

***The second resurrection is a bodily resurrection*** which will happen when the fullness of the Eschaton arrives in history:

*John 5:28, 29 “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”*

**To enter the Eschaton we must be regenerated by the Spirit of the Eschaton now.** If we want to partake of the second resurrection (bodily resurrection), *we must partake of the first resurrection now* (a spiritual resurrection). If we want to enter Eschaton later, we must possess its life now. If we want to enter the kingdom of God, we must be born from above.

*John 3:36 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

As every man has a human father; the child of God has a heavenly Father. As we are born physically into this world, we must be born spiritually into the world above. As the agent of physical birth is flesh, the Agent of spiritual birth is God's Spirit.

**To enter the kingdom of God** (The *age of regeneration*) we must acknowledge the authority of Christ the King.

The kingdom of God is *the rule of God*, and where God rules life reigns. However, the kingdom of God does **not** force itself on men. It attracts citizens by *persuasion* rather than by *force*. If we want to enter the kingdom of God, we must tender our resignation to self-rule and willingly accept Christ's jurisdiction over us as Lord of our life. Just as we need to change citizenship if we move to another country, we change our spiritual citizenship by accepting the authority of God's duly appointed King. We must come under new management by willingly surrendering the title deed of our life to the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9). When we confess Christ as Lord, and place our faith in him, we will experience the *first fruits of regeneration*—the birth from above.

When we receive Christ for Who He claimed to Be, we will experience the powers of regeneration and become part of the family of God.

*John 1:12-13 But as many as received him, to them gave he power (authority) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

What does it mean to “receive him?” To “receive him” does not mean to say a prayer. It does **not** mean “to ask Jesus into our heart.” It does **not** mean “to walk down a church isle.” To receive Christ, is to receive Him for Who He claimed to be: the Word made flesh (John 1:1, 14), God (1:1), Creator (1:2), Lamb of God (1:29), the Son of God (1:34), Messiah (1:41), and the King of Israel (1:49). When we surrender to the King, we enter the kingdom.

**When we receive Christ for Who He is, we become part of the family of God.** The Spirit of the Eschaton regenerates all of God's children. All His sons belong to an eschatological family destined to inherit the kingdom of God. This privilege is not earned by one's ancestral ties (blood), or by one's personal determination (will of the flesh), or by the wishes of a loved one (will of man), it is a gift of God.

God is in the business of regenerating souls. He placed a Serpent on a poll in the middle of history. Those who look to the Serpent for healing experience the regenerating powers of God's eschatological Spirit (John 3:14-16).

Did you notice the word “power” in John 1:12? The word “power” is **not** *dunamis* but *exousia* (evxousi,an), meaning “authority.” When we receive Christ, we gain a legal standing as a “son of God.” This legal standing is called “justification” in Scripture. **First**, we are declared righteous before God (justified), **then** we are made righteous (regeneration). Only the sons of God have a legal right to inherit the Eschaton.

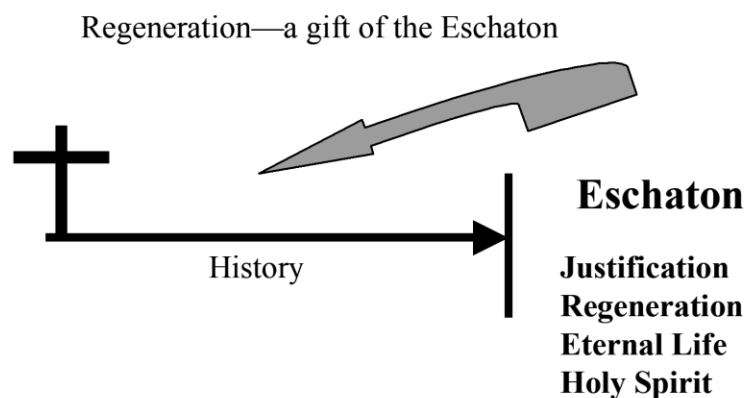
**When we receive Christ, we receive the gifts of the Eschaton:** justification, regeneration, eternal life, and the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:3-14). Eschatological blessings belong to the *age to come*. They are taken from the future and thrust into the present for us to enjoy now in a first fruits way in advance of the arrival of the Eschaton into history at the end of this age. When the kingdom of God entered history in

and through the ministry of Christ, He defeated man's enemies in order to bring men under the blessings of the *age to come*.

In Summary, unless we are born again, we will not enter the kingdom of God. We cannot make ourselves born again. The term "born again" does mean a "new lease on life." It means to receive life from above, eternal life, the life of the Eschaton. The Eschaton is the age to come, the Age of Resurrection.

*Regeneration is an eschatological event.* When we receive Christ, the *Spirit of the Eschaton*, who will regenerate all things in the age to come, regenerates and cleanses us now (Titus 3:5). If we are born again, we have eternal life—the life belonging to the age to come. If we are born again now, we take part in the first resurrection, and when the Eschaton arrives, we will participate in the second resurrection, a bodily resurrection. To experience the second resurrection, life from the physically dead, we must experience the first resurrection, life among the spiritually dead.

**Figure 8: Gift of the Eschaton**



Just as we entered this life through physical birth, we must enter eternal life through a spiritual birth. The Agent of eternal life is the Spirit of the Eschaton. When we receive Christ, the Ruler of God's kingdom, we receive a legal standing as a Son. All of God's sons receive the **gifts of the Eschaton**: *justification, eternal life, regeneration, and the Holy Spirit*.

When we are born again we are cleansed from our sins. This cleansing is called "*the washing of regeneration*," an eschatological event in the human soul. Having been cleansed by the Spirit of the Eschaton, we become a genuine member of God's family, an eschatological family. This guarantees us a future inheritance in the age to come—the age of regeneration. This is our hope. This is our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13, 14).

### **NICODEMUS AND REGENERATION**

Nicodemus was intrigued by Christ (John 3:1-36), but he lacked saving faith. When Nicodemus came by night to our Lord, Jesus informed Nicodemus that a man must be born again before He can enter the kingdom of God.

Jesus pressed **eight truths** upon Nicodemus:

- the futility of religion ("*the ruler of the Jews*"); and,

- the unity of revelation (“Do not marvel that...”); and,
- the necessity of regeneration (“You must *be born again*”); and,
- the agent of regeneration (“and the Spirit”); and,
- the mission of the Son (“to be lifted up”),
- the necessity of faith in Christ (“believeth in Him”); and,
- and the present condemnation of unbelieving men (“condemned already”); and, the release from condemnation of believing men.
- the possibility of experiencing eternal life, the first fruits of the age to come.
- The word “born again” comes from the Greek word *gennao*, which means “to be born” or “to bring forth from the womb.”

The phrase “*kingdom of God*” is critical to interpreting this passage correctly. The kingdom of God is the rule and *reign of God*. It also refers to the “*age to come*” as well as its present aspect. The age to come is the rule of Christ, the age where He rules and life reigns. If men want to enter into the life of the age to come, they need partake of that life now. Those who have kingdom “life” have accepted the authority of Christ and His Law-word. When a man changes governments and rearranges his affairs under the authority of Christ; i.e. he is born again. Those who have been born again have accepted Christ and yielded to His authority now, in this life.

Christ used the terms “*flesh*” and “*spirit*.” the flesh is “all *that man is apart from God*.” The Spirit is the “*life of God*.” To enter the kingdom, a man must possess the life of the Spirit.

The new birth is a mystery: There is **no** command to go and be born again. The word “*spirit*” is the word “wind.” Jesus said to Nicodemus, “*thou knowest not what is the way of the wind*.” This is Jesus style of saying that regeneration is not under the control of man. It is a work of the Spirit. New life is a gift of God. Man can do nothing to bring about the life of the Spirit. New life belongs to the kingdom of God. It is a gift from the Eschaton sovereignly bestowed to those who desire to participate in the life of the age to come. There is nothing a man can do to be born again. The new birth remains a mystery . . . but those that have it seem to hunger to know Christ in a deeper, more significant way. They love the Word of God and seem to hang around others who study the Bible.

### **THE METHOD OF REGENERATION**

Regeneration is (John 1:12-13) . . .

- Not “*of blood*,” that is, not by family inheritance, position, or genetics.
- Not by the “*will of the flesh*,” that is, it is not due to human effort, works, abilities, or energies.
- Not by the “*will of man*,” that is, it is not due to human determination or human decision.
- It is a “*work of God*” (John 1:13), a “*work of the Holy Spirit*” (Titus 3:5).

*“Of water and spirit:”* What does *ex udatos kai pneumatosis* mean? Many interpretations have been advanced as to what the “water” refers: natural birth, the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and baptism. Of the four presented, only the latter does violence to Scripture.

The fact that “water” and “spirit” are connected by one preposition indicates to me that water and spirit are the same, distinguished only by the dual action of the Spirit; that is, the Spirit “cleanses” (Ezekiel 36:25ff; Titus 3:5) and the Spirit “*imparts the life of the kingdom*” to believing men. The only baptism preached up to this point is the baptism of the Spirit (John 1:33).

*Job 33:4 The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.*

*John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

*Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

*Romans 8:10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

*2 Corinthians 3:6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*

*Galatians 6:8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*

The new birth is experiential, but it is non-sensational: that is, it becomes real in a person’s experience, but the implantation of the Spirit doesn’t appeal to man’s sensuality, that is, you can’t feel, taste, touch, hear, or see the Spirit’s work (John 3:5-14).

### **OLD TESTAMENT PICTURES OF REGENERATION**

Jesus chided Nicodemus for ignorance regarding the new birth: “*Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*” (3:10). If Nicodemus had known the Tanach better, he would have grasped the truth Jesus taught about the new birth.

**The birth of Isaac through Sarah** (Genesis 21): Like unbelievers are dead, Sarah’s womb was dead. Just as the Spirit regenerated Sarah’s womb and she bore her son, Isaac—a picture of righteousness, the Spirit regenerates souls. Just as there was tension between Ishmael and Isaac, there is tension between the flesh and the Spirit (Galatians 5:16ff).

**The Bronze Serpent** (Numbers 21): Snake bitten Israelites were dying. One look at the bronze serpent and gazers were healed no matter how bad the bite, no matter where they were bitten, and no matter how many times they were bitten.

**Raising of the Widow’s son** (1 Kings 17): The boy was dead. Elijah stretched his body over the boy, prayed three times, and the boy came back to life. It is the authority and life of the once dead, buried, and risen Savior that enables the soul to live. When sinners believe, they are immediately identified with the death, burial, and resurrected Christ . . . and they come to life (Romans 6:2-11; Ephesians 2:1-7).

**Raising of Shunammite’s son** (2 Kings 4:21): Type one: Just as her womb was given life by the Word of the Lord (4:16), we are born by the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23); Type two: like the “lad was dead” (4:32),

the soul of the sinner is dead. Elisha sent his servant with his staff to raise the boy back to life, but the servant could not impart life. Only when Elijah laid himself across the boy, did life return to the Shunammite's son. Likewise, God did not send an angel to regenerate our souls. He sent His Son. The Savior in whom life dwells (John 5:26) came from heaven to die on the cross in time so that we might have life for all eternity (John 10:10). Because he was fully man, he could be man's perfect Representative. Because He fully identified with humanity, we are fully saved.

**Healing the Poison Stew** (2 Kings 5:38): Like a wild herb poisoned the pot of stew, the wild root of sin in our lives produces death (Romans 6:23). As the meal healed the poisoned stew, so Christ, the Bread of Life solves the problem of death in our pot (John 6:50).

**Healing of the waters of Jericho** (2 Kings 2): Like Elisha healed the bitter waters at Jericho by pouring in salt into the stream, sinners are saved from the penalty and power of sin by the salt-life of Christ (Romans 5:10).

**Healing of Naaman** (2 Kings 5): Like Naaman, the Syrian general, had leprosy, so the sinner has moral leprosy. Just as Naaman visited many doctors who could not heal him, so the sinner tries many false spiritual-physicians before he comes to Christ. As Naaman was reluctant to obey the prophet, sinners are reluctant to obey Christ. Like Naaman was healed after he washed in Israel's Jordan River, sinners are healed when they seek cleansing from Christ, the True Israel of God. There is a river that cleanses souls and imparts life (John 3:5; 7:38; Titus 3:5; 1 John 1:7).

**Return of the Israelites** (Ezekiel 37): Ripped out of their homeland and exiled to Babylon, the nation of Israel was dead (586 B.C.). In Babylon without a land, without a temple, without a king, the exiles were a graveyard of dry bones. But, the Spirit of God moved upon the bones, upon Cyrus, and Cyrus gave the order for the remnant to return to Jerusalem to build a temple to God. In 536 B.C., the nation was reborn. Suddenly, the original people, with their original language, with their original land, were ordered to rebuild the Lord's House. Likewise, sinners are dead (Ephesians 2:1). But, when the Spirit plants life in the soul, sinners are reborn (John 3:3-7) and they become a temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19). This passage does **not** refer to or apply to the other Israel being declared a nation in 1948 by the U.N.

## **REGENERATION AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY**

To enter into the life to come, one must possess the life of the kingdom now. Man's dilemma is that he is "*dead in trespasses and sins*"; i.e. he is flesh. Though he can do nothing to "*be born again*" because it is a work of God, *he can put himself in the way of blessing*.

John 3:14 teaches us that just as those bitten by serpents in the wilderness had to look away from the snakes, their snake bites, and their primitive remedies, and to the brass serpent on the pole in the middle of the camp, modern man can look away from self and sin and look to the doing and dying of Christ as God's remedy for sin. He must look outside, not inside; He must look back in history to the cross, not forward to an Age of Aquarius; He must look away from self—that miserable self to see the righteousness of Another; and, He must look away from religion and all of man's remedies for a sick soul to Christ alone, the One made sin for us.

*2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

Receive Christ for Who He is: the Logos, the Light, the Life, the Lord, the Savior, and the Lamb of God (John 1:12). Receiving Christ is **not** “a prayer.” It involves a change of government, a turning over of the “title deed” of one’s life to Christ, a reception of the “rule of God” in one’s heart and mind (Matthew 11:28, 29).

Believe or commitment: The word “*receive*” and the word “*believe*” are co-joined (John 1:12, 13). The word “*believe*” and “*commit*” are also connected (John 2:24). God calls sinful man to look away from all earthly hopes to Heaven’s Gift as the only means of obtaining the washing away of sins and the impartation of the life of the Spirit. Man cannot command the Spirit, but He can yield to the command of the Spirit—then, and only then, perhaps, the wind of the sovereign Spirit might flow in a man’s life—but, it remains a mystery.

### **SATAN’S IMITATION OF REGENERATION**

Satan’s imitation of “being born again,” or reversing the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation): (Present Truth/Verdict, vol. 3, No. 5, 1974).

- To substitute the work of God outside the believer at the cross for the work of God within the believer as the Gospel.
- To shift the emphasis from Christ’s experiences to the believer’s experience.
- To present the saved as the Savior; the object of love as the subject of love; man as God.
- To present “new birth” preaching as a substitute for justification-centered preaching.
- To substitute work within for work without. Looking inward to self, instead of outward to Christ.
- To confuse sanctification as justification.
- To substitute the believer’s auto-crucifixion (death to self) for Christ’s crucifixion.
- To substitute the inspection of Christ’s history for introspection of the believer’s personal history.
- To confuse the way of God as His effort to make sinful man happy, instead of the only way, his way of making Himself, a dissatisfied Judge happy with a rebellious sinner.
- To stress that God is beholden to man instead of man being beholden to God.
- To make change in the heart (regeneration, sanctification) instead of the change in position (justification) as the basis of salvation.
- To stress blessing on bios (biological life) and instead of the blessings of zoe (eternal life).
- To substitute visible righteousness (man’s works) for invisible righteousness (Christ).
- To substitute what man should do to “be born again” for what “Christ has done for man” to be justified. Note the “What must I do” tracts circulated with the following titles.

you must repent.



you must believe.

you must choose.

you must surrender.

- To substitute a gospel that begins and ends with man instead of preaching a gospel that begins and ends with Christ.
- To substitute election (God choosing man) for freedom of choice (man choosing God). The Gospel is the good news of God choosing man, not man's act of choosing God (John 6:44).

### **THE RELATIONSHIP OF REGENERATION TO JUSTIFICATION**

Reformers are agreed that justification and regeneration are closely related and that one cannot be present without the other. Only logically did Calvin place justification before regeneration (Calvin, 1536; 1936, Bk. 3, chap. 11, sec. 6, 11). God justifies "*the ungodly*" (first), then "*the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us*" (second) (Romans 4:5; 5:5). Regeneration is subordinate to justification, **not** justification to regeneration.

### **REGENERATION AND THE EFFECTUAL CALLING**

Generally speaking, the Westminster Confession (X), Reformed Theology, includes effectual calling as regeneration; that is, regeneration begins with God's drawing and enlightening the mind of the unbeliever making him susceptible to the truth of the gospel.

**Berkoff** (1992, p. 471) says, "In a systematic presentation of the truth, however, *we should carefully discriminate between calling and regeneration.*" I agree for the following reason: We must distinguish between justification and regeneration and not make regeneration (a change in heart or condition) the basis of justification. This would make justification dependent on *change* rather than on faith. The question is this: *How changed do I have to become in order to be right with God? Have I changed enough?* If we have "to be holy" before we are "pronounced holy," then justification is always in doubt. Who among us is holy enough?

Berkoff goes on to say that regeneration works from *within* while the effectual calling works from *without*. No man can come to Christ and "except the Father which has sent me draw him" (John 6:44). First, we are called; then we come; we hear the gospel, then we feel Him pulling us toward Himself. Hearing about the kingdom is not the same thing as having the life of the kingdom. Pre-conversion work should be separated from God's regenerating work in the soul.

## **THE ORDER OF SALVATION (*Ordu Salutis*)**

In 1543, Copernicus discovered the astronomical principle that the earth was not the center of the universe, but that the earth revolved around the Sun. At the same time, a little monk in German discovered a "Copernican revolution in theology." For a thousand years, the church saw man as the starting point of theology. While Copernicus turned the scientific world upside down, Luther turned the theological world right side up by plunging into the Book of Romans.

So, what is the order of salvation? This is a highly controversial issue. Protestants are not agreed on this subject. The issue is this: What comes first, the *chicken or the egg*; *justification or regeneration*?

**Informed Catholics** would say regeneration precedes justification.

**R. C. Sproul** says a cardinal point of Reformed theology is the maxim: "Regeneration precedes faith." He argues for the monergistic work of God prior to salvation in contrast to a synergistic process wherein man cooperates with God in the regeneration process. To Sproul the "effectual calling" and "regeneration" are one in the same; i.e. his view of regeneration encompasses the whole process of salvation. This enlarged view of regeneration caused Sproul to believe in "Faith—rebirth—justification;" i.e. regeneration precedes justification. The problem is two fold: (A) a broad definition of regeneration which includes the entire calling process, and (B) making justification subordinate to regeneration (Sproul, 1994, Chapter, Free Will, p. 72).

**Robert Brinsmead** ("Present Truth", November, 1974, p. 13) says the *ordo salutis* was the supreme heartthrob of the Reformation. He argues the gospel is **not** *what man must do to be saved, but what God has done in Christ for man to be saved*. In this, Sproul and Brinsmead agree. In the October, 1975 edition, Brinsmead stated, "*But the Reformers, in the true evangelical sense, taught that justification bears the fruit of a regenerated life*" (p. 41). If this be the case, then Sproul's view is an anomaly but not untypical of reformed theologians.

The Reformers did not place the main emphasis on the need for righteousness within man, but placed the supreme emphasis on extrinsic grace and God's work *outside* of man. Catholics placed supreme grace *within* man. Catholics utterly confounded two aspects of redemption -- Christ's work of doing and dying and interceding *for us*, and Christ's work *in us*. Thus, Catholicism confounded gospel and law.

Based on a wide definition of regeneration, some reformed theologians like R. C. Sproul conclude regeneration precedes justification. But, based on a narrow definition of regeneration, Brinsmead concluded that justification and regeneration are closely connected, and happen rather simultaneously. But logically, Brinsmead understood justification (declaring righteous) happens before regeneration (impartation of divine life and nature). Otherwise, one could easily err by insisting on a change in heart (regeneration) as the basis of justification. This would make salvation dependent on grace in the heart rather than place the emphasis of the grace revealed at Calvary through Jesus our Representative.

For example, let's say a man has been charged with a crime and has a trial before a judge. He wants to embrace life, but he cannot enjoy freedom until his legal standing has been pronounced. If the judge says, "not guilty" his legal standing is secure, and the cleared can now begin to enjoy his new freedom; that is, once he is justified in court first, he can enjoy new life second. Justification precedes regeneration and the enjoyment of freedom from condemnation.

### **THE ORDU SALUTIS**

- **Divine provision:** Christ came to represent His own. He obeyed the law perfectly for us, and died as our Representative sin bearer on the cross. He did all that was necessary to secure a place for us in eternity.
- Divine election and foreknowledge (Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 1:2).

- Divine calling and drawing (Romans 8:30; John 6:37; 40). This calling would include the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit reconditioning man and making his heart receptive to the gospel (1 Peter 1:2). Some would say regeneration begins here because of their broad view of regeneration.
- Hearing: Unregenerate men hear the preaching of the gospel.
- **Faith and repentance:** enabled by the Holy Spirit to understand the gospel, repentant man believes the gospel and is saved.

When we emphasize what man must do to be “born again,” instead of What God has done for man in Christ, we reverse the *ordu salutis*. The gospel is **not** that “You must believe,” or “You must be saved,” or “You must be born again,” or that “You must surrender.” The Gospel is that God has provide a Savior and through His death, burial, and resurrection He has done all that is necessary for men to obtain peace with God.

### **THE LEGAL BLESSING OF SALVATION:**

- **Justification:** believing man is declared righteous in the sight of God and treated as such.
- Regeneration: The Holy Spirit unites a man to Christ, changes his disposition, and imparts new life into his heart (John 3:3; Titus 3:5). Change begins to occur in the life of the believer, but this change is never the basis of his salvation. All the legal blessings of the age to come become the possession of the believer: redemption, reconciliation, adoption, sonship, etc.
- Sanctification: The Holy Spirit begins to work in the heart of believer to make him like Christ. Believers become holy (like Christ) as they obey the Word of God and appropriate His promises (1 Peter 1:15, 16; 2 Peter 1:3-8). (Note: there is a pre-salvic, sanctifying work of the Spirit whereby the Holy Spirit draws and prepares the sinner to receive the gospel message).
- Glorification: This will be the day when the believer receives his new, glorified body and is conformed perfectly to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29; 1 John 3:1-2; Philippians 3:20-21).
- The Gospel of Christ is the good news that God choses man, not that man chooses God; that God first works in the heart of man so he can believe the gospel; that God seeks man before man seeks God; that God justifies the ungodly, then regenerates the just. Believing man is “declared righteous,” then he is “made righteous” as God’s new creation.

## **53. THE BLESSING OF ETERNAL LIFE**

The gift of eternal life is one the four major benefits preached by the apostles after the resurrection (Acts 11:18; 13:46; Romans 6:23). Eternal life is the central theme of Jesus in John’s Gospel; but in the Synoptics, it is the kingdom of God (Ladd, 1974, p. 254ff):

### **IMMORTALITY**

Q: Does man’s soul live forever?

**The Greeks** believed that ideas, philosophies, and spirit were a part of an unseen spiritual reality. The Greeks believed that man had an immortal soul. When Socrates took his life, he did so believing that death was a friend; that death freed him from the prison of his own body; that his spirit would live on with the gods. A man can believe anything, but what is the evidence? What makes Socrates' faith-statement more than wish and a dream?

**From a Christian** stand point, the Greeks were wrong. Death is not a friend. It is not beautiful — even the death of Jesus was ugly. Death is an enemy that stalks man every day of his life. It is a tragic and painful end to temporal life (1 Corinthians 15:51-53). God alone has immortality (1 Timothy 6:16).

*1 Timothy 6:16 **Who only (monos) hath immortality**, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.*

Only our Lord Jesus Christ has life within himself.

*John 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*

But, in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ,

*our "Savior Jesus Christ . . . hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality (apharsia) to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10).*

Jesus defeated death and because He lives, believers have real, tangible, forensic hope that His promise of eternal life is more than a philosophy, more than an idea, more than a religious invention.

## **LINGUISTIC DATA**

There are two words for life in the New Testament: *zoe* and *bios*. The word *bios* always refers to the principle of physical life. We get the term "biology" from this Greek root.

The word for *eternal life* is *zoe*, and it occurs 36 times in John. The infinitive *zen* is used 16 times. The compound verb *zoopoiein* is used three times. The adjective *aionios*, says Ladd, doesn't carry a qualitative difference in kind from human life. ***Zoe is the life from God.*** (Ladd, 1974)

## **HEBREW BACKGROUND**

The word *hayye olam*, "*the life of the age*" (Daniel 12:2) designates the future age after the resurrection. The meaning is **not** a reference to immortality after death, but complete well-being in earthly existence. This life was a gift of God full of blessing and gifts (Psalm 91:16). It included:

- Family blessings (Ecclesiastes 9:9)
- Prosperity (Deuteronomy 28:1ff)
- Security (Deuteronomy 8:1)
- Fellowship with God (Psalm 16:11).

During the Intertestament Period, Judaism concluded that death is not the end, that *sheol* was an intermediate state where the dead await resurrection. The view that there must be a quality of life in a future state emerged during this period says Ladd (1974, p. 255).

### **LIFE IN GNOSTICISM**

Life in **Gnosticism** was connected to God. But man, because of His ignorance and love of this earthly existence became mortal. By dispelling ignorance and by gaining *gnosis*, man could return to life and light. *The Gnostics saw education as the key to freedom*. By passing through various spheres of *gnosis* and by denying bodily desires, man could find his true identity and true meaning in life. John's gospel builds upon the Gnostic belief, *but credits light and life to Jesus Christ, the Logos of God and **not** to gnosis for gnosis sake.*

### **LIFE IN THE SYNOPTICS**

**Life in the gospels** is connected with *the age to come, the kingdom of God* (Mark 10:17; 10:23; 10:30). Eternal life is the life of the kingdom, the dawning of the age to come. The idiom "life" is used in an eschatological sense in the gospels (Matthew 7:14; Mark 9:43, 45).

*Mark 10:17,23 . . . Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit **eternal life**? . . . And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into **the kingdom of God**!*

### **LIFE IN THE BOOK OF JOHN**

Life still retains its eschatological character in the Gospel of John (John 4:14; 12:25), but it also has the potential to be experienced in present time (John 10:10).

*John 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

*John 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

*John 12:25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

**Rabbis** saw that a study of the Torah would lead to life in the age to come, **but Jesus** connected life in the age to come with a relationship to Himself (3:36). No law can create life or regenerate society, but faith in Christ who is Life is the promise of eternal life.

*John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*

The whole purpose of John's Gospel is **not** to show men the way to life in the age to come, "but to bring them into a present experience of this future life" now through a relationship with God's Son (Ladd, 1974, p. 257).

**The Jews** considered the Torah as the means to life, but John's gospel informs us that life is connected to knowing Christ. **Christ** came from heaven to give life to the world (6:33), to satisfy hunger (6:35). His

very words are life (6:63). In John, this life could be a present reality; i.e. a present possession now, in this age, in this life.

*John 5:25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, **and now is**, when the dead (unregenerate men) shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live (undergo a spiritual renewal).*

Notice the phrase “*and now is*.” To John, eternal life had arrived in history. He connects eternal life with the kingdom of God after his only references to the kingdom of God in John 3:3-5. This life is part of the *gnosis*, and the *gnosis* is within reach of all men.

### **ETERNAL LIFE AND KNOWLEDGE**

To the **Gnostics**, possession of knowledge leads to life, to meaning, to things above. “This knowledge is self-knowledge in the sense that man recognizes his true nature and his true place in the universe” (Ladd, 1974, p. 261).

**To the Jews**, knowledge connotes *experience* **rather** than *contemplation* (Isaiah 1:3). Knowledge (*yada*) involves *relationship*, *fellowship*, and *intense interest* in another being (Psalm 1:6).

**In John**, knowledge is an *experiential relationship*, “My sheep hear my voice and I know (*ginw,skw*) them . . .” (John 10:27ff; 10:14-15). To Jesus, men are ignorant of God, not because they are human, but because they reject Him!

To John, the life of the age to come arrived in history in the person and mission of Christ, and for those who boldly trust the Logos, He grants them true Life, the knowledge of the Father and a relationship with Himself.

*John 17:2-3 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

### **TWO MEANINGS OF ETERNAL LIFE**

The Bible teaches that God’s kingdom would change the political order and displace all human rule and authority (Isaiah 2:1-4), and transform the physical order (Isaiah 11).

The Mystery of the kingdom is this: The kingdom is marked by the dominance of life: that the kingdom which will one day change the entire external order of creation has entered history in advance of it’s the Eschaton to bring the blessing of God’s kingdom to men and women without transforming the old order; that is, the life of the kingdom is available to those who trust Christ now.

The term *Eternal Life* has at least **two meanings** (Ladd, 1959, p. 66ff):

**First, eternal life is a future event involving perfect fellowship with God.** In Matthew 25:46 the wicked are sentenced to eternal punishment, but the righteous receive eternal life. The kingdom and Life are equated, but ***Eternal Life belongs to the Eschaton*** and appears to be something that man **cannot** enjoy now (Matthew 19:16ff). It is a future hope that is concerned with the whole man: mind, soul, and body (2 Corinthians 5:1ff; 15:50; Revelation 22:1-2). In this future life, God shall dwell among his people (22:3), and men “shall see His face.” Here is perfect fellowship and perfect enjoyment of God’s love.

**This life is future.** It is part of the age to come; part of the Eschaton. Yet, Jesus declared, “*I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly.*” Somehow, the life of the future has come into this present evil age now and is available to mortal men as a gift of God. **It is possible** to possess this life now by hearing and believing the Son (John 5:24).

**Q:** What is this life?

*“That men might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent”*  
(John 17:3).

The **Greek** idea of knowledge is *comprehension of facts*, but the **Hebrew** idea of knowledge is *personal relationship*. Hebraic knowledge results in *fellowship* with the Father.

**First**, the perfect fellowship reserved for the age to come can now be appropriated, not perfectly in its fullness and perfection, but it can have *partial realization now!* Eternal life means believers have been introduced to God; that God has become the God of Christians: that Christians have become His people; that all true believers have fellowship with Him (1 John 1:5-7).

Thus *eternal life* is the fulfillment of the following promises:

*Jeremiah 31:31-33 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

*In this age* we know in part, but then in the *Eschaton*, we shall fully know. Now we see in a “*mirror dimly*,” but *then* in the kingdom we shall see “*face to face*.” Now we love imperfectly, but in the *age to come* we shall fully exercise the gift of love.

**Second**, the meaning of eternal life is the life of God's Spirit dwelling within us. *The Life of the age to come is the work of the Spirit of God:*

- The Spirit rests on the Administrator (Isaiah 11:2; 42:1).
- The Spirit will renew the earth (Isaiah 32:15 ).
- The Spirit will renew Israel (Isaiah 44:3; Ezekiel 11:19; 37:14).
- The Spirit will regenerate the heart (Ezekiel 36:26).
- The Spirit will generate vision (Joel 2:28)

In the age to come, the Spirit will regenerate the body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). A “*spiritual*” body is **not** a body made of Spirit; rather, *it is a body that derives its energy from the Spirit.*

In this present evil age, the Spirit regenerates the soul of man. Believers have a partial possession of the Spirit now, “*the earnest of the Spirit*” (Ephesians 1:13, 14), a small down payment of the full benefit to

come. Paul also says believers now have the “*firstfruits*,” a token of the full harvest to come, the complete redemption of their bodies (Romans 8:22ff). Today, in a *firstfruits way*, the eschatological Spirit regenerates, washes, sanctifies, and renews believers (John 3:5; Titus 3:5), but the *full harvest* awaits the Eschaton.

Conclusion: This is eternal life: to know and enjoy God in this present evil age living the life of heaven in the company of others who also share a relationship with Christ; to experience the power of the age to come by the regenerating work of the Spirit of God; and to fellowship with others who have experienced this same transformation.

## 54. THE BLESSING OF THE THE HOLY SPIRIT

Q: Who or what is the Holy Spirit: a person or influence?

Introduction: Little is known about this wonderful and glorious Person among the general population today. In fact, the Holy Spirit is one of the most misunderstood subjects of the Word of God. From dead orthodoxy to the feverish claims of the “second blessing” tenants, confusion abounds. Few have a balanced, scriptural view regarding the third person of the Trinity and even less fellowship with Him. Fights, divisions, and divorce are too common among Christians. Isn’t it because so few have ever known what it means to “walk in the Spirit.” What does the Scripture say about Him?

*The gift of the Holy Spirit is a benefit of the gospel.* It is good news that God has sent His Spirit to indwell and regenerate man.

### IDENTITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Negatively:** He is not an influence, a force, or an energy emanating from the Father. A few centuries after the death of Christ, a man named Arias taught that the Holy Spirit was an eternal energy proceeding from God and that Jesus was merely a man. Rightly so, orthodox teachers of the day refuted Arias. The Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. condemned Arias as a heretic.

### HIS PERSONALITY

He is a Person and He possesses all the characteristics of a person. He has personality: *Intellect* (1 Corinthians 2:10ff), *emotions* (Romans 15:30; Ephesians 4:30), and *will* (Acts 13:2ff).

- He has *self-awareness* (Acts 13:2).
- He has self-determination (1 Corinthians 12:11).
- He has individuality (John 14:26).
- He has *moral sensitivity* (Acts 5:3; Romans 1:4).



### **HIS INFINITE NATURE**

- He is *eternal* (Hebrews 9:14)
- He is omnipresence (Psalm 139:7; 1 Corinthians 6:19)
- He is omniscience (1 Corinthians 2:10-11; John 16:13).
- He is omnipresence (Psalm 139: 5ff).

### **HIS GENDER**

The “*Spirit*” is usually spelled in the neuter and is synonymous with “wind” or “breath.” Referring to the Spirit in the neuter gender has led some to conclude the Spirit is a force or a power, but not a divine Person or a part of the Godhead. However, He is sometimes referred to with *masculine personal pronouns* (John 15:26; 16:7, 13-14) when readily neuter pronouns were available in the Greek language.

### **THE NAMES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

He is called:

- “God” (Acts 5:3-4);
- “Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11);
- “Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:17-18);
- “Temple of God” (1 Corinthians 3:16);
- “Eternal Spirit” (Hebrews 9:14);
- “Spirit of Glory (1 Peter 4:14);
- “Spirit of holiness” (Romans 1:4);
- “Spirit of wisdom” (Ephesians 1:17);
- “Spirit of truth” (John 14:17);
- “Spirit of grace” (Hebrews 10:29);
- “Spirit of adoption” (Romans 8:15);
- “Spirit of faith” (2 Corinthians 4:13);
- “The Helper” (John 14:16);
- “The Comforter (John 14:16);

### **HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE TRINITY**

**(Barackman, p. 202):**

He is equal in nature and substance.

- **Ontological subordination:** He proceeds from the Father through the Son (John 15:26). He is third in order, but not third class; that is, He is not inferior to the Father or to the Son.
- **Economical subordination:** He is the agent or cause of the miracles of Christ.
- **Spiration:** Spiration is the process by which the Father through the Son communicates to the Holy Spirit the divine nature in such a way that each Person wholly possesses it, and yet there remains but one God.
- **Procession:** Procession represents the result of the above process.

Because of His relationship to the Father, the Spirit is called "*the Spirit of God*," or "*Spirit of the Lord*," and "*Spirit of your Father*" (1 Corinthians 6:11; Isaiah 59:19; Matthew 10:20). Because of His relationship to the Son, He is called: "*the Spirit of the Son*," or "*the Spirit of Jesus*," or the "*Spirit of Christ*" (Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:9; Philippians 1:19).

Conclusion: The Holy Spirit is an infinite, personal Spirit; co-equal with the Father and the Son. Because He is personal, He can be known; because He is infinite, every need of finite man can be fully met through Him (Ephesians 3:16).

### **THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT**

The Old Testament saints never tasted the undocked powers of the age to come. They saw it at a distance. The OT taught that age to come would be a marvelous age, an age where God's Spirit would be poured forth to regenerate the earth, to change the heart of man, to unite men to God, and to take up residence in the heart of the righteous.

- John the Baptist announced the Age of the Spirit (Matthew 3)
- Jesus announced the presence of the kingdom of God and gave credit to the Spirit (Matthew 12).
- Jesus announced to the disciples the coming of the Spirit into this present evil age to indwell men (John 14, 16).

The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost in power (Acts 2). But, if the Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, in what way was He at work in the OT? The Holy Spirit did not indwell men previous to this (John 14) or did He? How did righteous men in the OT have power to do what was right without the Holy Spirit?

### **THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT**

- He regenerates men (Titus 3:5; John 3)
- He indwells men (John 14:16-17).
- He baptizes men into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12).
- He leads men (Galatians 5:18; Ephesians 5:18).

- He seals saints (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:22).
- He anoints men (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).
- He gives gifts (1 Corinthians 12:3ff).
- He empowers service (Acts 1:8).
- He sanctifies (2 Corinthians 3:18).

## **THE WORKS OF THE SPIRIT**

### **HIS WORK IN CREATION**

In the beginning, He was the Agent of creation (Genesis 1:2), thus, He is the Creator.

### **HIS WORK SINCE THE FALL**

In reference to man's historical decision to reject the rule of God in the Garden, we learn the Spirit of God acted as follows:

- **As a Restrainer:** He restrains wickedness and promotes righteousness (Genesis 6:3; Isaiah 63:10; 2 Thessalonians 2:4ff).
- **As Revealer:** He has revealed the truth about God and His will to men through the prophets of Israel (2 Samuel 23:2; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter. 1:20, 21).
- **As Renditioner:** He granted to men special abilities:
  - To the elders he gave wisdom (Numbers 11:25).
  - To craftsmen he gave skill (Exodus 31:1-31).
  - To judges he gave courage (Judges 6:34, 13:25; 14:6, 19)
  - To kings he gave leadership (1 Samuel 10:6, 11:6)
  - To prophets, boldness and power (2 Chronicles 15:1; Ezekiel 2:2).
- **As Regent of salvation:** He sanctifies men and prepares them for salvation (1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13).
- **As Reprover:** He convicts and convinces, rebukes and reproves (brings to light) men "of sin" (John 16:8-11); that is, He convicts men of a self-governed life; "of righteousness;" i.e. of the need to have a right relationship with God and to be reconciled to Him; and, "of judgment;" i.e. of ultimate accountability to their Creator.
- Of sin (singular), because men do not believe the Son.

- Of righteousness, because Jesus was righteous.
- Of judgment, because Satan was judged in the ministry of Christ.
- As Royal Ambassador: As He bears witness to Christ through men (John 15:27).
- As Representative: He grants repentance and faith (Acts 3:16; 5:31; 11:18; 1 Peter. 1:1).

In dispensational theology, dispensationalists understand the Holy Spirit did not indwell men. He influenced men, and He anointed a selected few for divine, earthly purposes, but there is no evidence He indwelt any previous to Pentecost.

- His presence was strictly temporary.
- His presence was selective and came only on kings, priests, and prophets.
- His work was from without, not within.
- He did not regenerate men.
- His ministry was enabling.

This teaching, however, needs to be reviewed. Jesus chastised Nicodemus as a teacher in Israel for not understanding the need for rebirth through the agency of the Spirit of God. One must ask, “Were men regenerated in the OT?” “If so, how were men regenerated in the OT?”

The answer to these questions as a “Yes” is done more by inference than by direct textual references. Furthermore, what then was the significance of Pentecost if the Spirit regenerated men in the old dispensation? Two ideas are offered:

Believing men must have been regenerated by the Spirit of God in the OT or they could not have life or be in right relationship to God. The doctrine of regeneration was not directly taught in the OT but was typologized in Israel’s symbols, institutions, and history. For example: The water out of the rock, or the healing by the Serpent could represent the Spirit and regeneration.

Pentecost, while not unique, appears to be something new -- an empowering of the saints to proclaim the gospel. This was never done on such a wide scale in the OT or was it?

Let’s not forget **the First Pentecost**, a civil Pentecost wherein God anointed the elders of Israel (Numbers 11:25-29). But, as significant and wonderful as this outpouring of the Spirit was it doesn’t seem to possess the enduring character of universal participation as does the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2, **the Second Pentecost**, and as connected with the Christian possession of the “*earnest*” of the Spirit in Ephesians 1:13-14.

Therefore, my conclusion is that the Holy Spirit did regenerate men in the OT, but he did **not** commission them or empower them for the purpose of proclamation on such a comprehensive scale as He does in the NT era.

## **THE UNIQUE MESSAGE OF THE SPIRIT**

*1 Peter 1:11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*

**A New Day:** From the day sin entered in the world, the Holy Spirit spoke of a future day when God's rule would once again be established on earth and the effects of sin would be reversed (Psalm 98; Isaiah 11: Isaiah 32):

*Psalm 96:10 Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously.*

**A New Man:** He spoke of a day when the hearts of men would be changed, regenerated, and made righteousness. On that day there would be equality among men, and men would long submit to God's law because of God's indwelling Spirit.

*Ezekiel 36:26, 27 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

**A New Creation:** The Spirit testified that in the age to come, He would transform the environment, making the deserts bloom, making peace with creation, defeating death, and creating an earthly paradise (Isaiah 11; 32).

*Isaiah 32:15 Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.*

**A New Society:** The spirit revealed that in a future time, God's rule would be established on earth and bring peace among men (Psalm 2; Isaiah 2).

*Isaiah 2:4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*

**A New King:** The rule of God would come through the Holy Spirit-filled Administrator- the Messiah, the root of Jesse. He would be a special servant/king (Isaiah 11), with a special but mysterious personality (Isaiah 9:6ff), with special powers (Isaiah 61:2ff). He would destroy all (Satan and his coalition) who resist the rule of God bringing an end to the kingdoms of men (Daniel 2).

**Conclusion:** The Holy Spirit is an infinite person whose mission is to restrain the wicked, to reveal the glorious future age, to ultimately establish the rule of God on earth, and to sign God's special Anointed who would administrate the affairs of His kingdom as a Prophet, Priest, and King.

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE GOSPEL**

**He announced the Gospel:** In the Old Testament, the Spirit testified of the dawning of a new age among men. It would be a marvelous age, an age where God's Spirit would be poured forth to regenerate the earth, to regenerate the heart of man, to unite men to God, and to take up residence in the heart of the

righteous. The message of the Spirit was a New Day (Psalm 96, 98; Isaiah 11), a New Man (Ezekiel 36:27), a New Creation (Isaiah 32:14, 15), and a New King (Isaiah 59:21; 61:1ff). Succingly, His gospel is "the Lord reigns" (Psalm 97:1; 99:1).

The Old Testament saints never tasted the powers of the age to come. They saw it at a distance. Suddenly, the New Testament period opens following a 400 hundred-year silence. The Spirit moved and He had a new message for Israel and work to perform. The Messianic Age was upon a nation in a wonderful, yet limited way.

*John the Baptist announced the Age of the Spirit* (Matthew 3) as one where the Messiah would baptize the righteous with the Spirit.

*Jesus announced the presence of the kingdom of God* and gave credit to the Spirit (Matthew 12). The powers of the age to come dawned over the mountains of Israel. Jesus was casting out demons and God's rule was present among men.

Jesus announced to the disciples the coming of the Spirit into this present evil age to indwell men (John 14, 16).

- He discharged the history of Christ:
- His birth (Luke 1:26-38).
- His ministry (Luke 3:21-22; 4:1; 14: 17-19; Matthew 12:25ff).
- His death (Hebrews 9:14).
- His resurrection (Romans 1:4; 8:11).
- His present risen life (1 Corinthians 12:1-3).
- His coming glory (Revelation 22:17; 1 Peter 1:10-11).

**He ministers to the lost:** "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).

- He reproves of sin
- He convinces men of the need for righteousness.
- He points men to ultimate accountability.
- He testifies to the gospel (Acts 5:32; John 15:26, 27; 16:12, 13):
- He revealed Christ's history.
- He revealed the effects of his history.
- He guards the gospel (1 Timothy 4:1, 1 John 4:1-6; 2 Timothy 1:14).

**He empowers men to preach the gospel (Acts. 1:8).**

*And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power (1 Corinthians 2:4).*

**He elects, draws men, and he saves believers by the gospel** (1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; John 16:8-13).

He constructed the New Testament and thus preserved the gospel (2 Timothy 3:16).

- He spoke through John.
- He spoke through Jesus.
- He spoke through the apostles.

## **THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT**

In Old Testament times, the coming of the Spirit was a future event. Ancient Hebrews connected the divine visitation with the last days, or the final act of human history.

*Acts 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh.*

Jesus announced the Spirit would come to all believers soon after His departure and that His Spirit would perform an entirely unique work in the believer that had never been accomplished before in history of mankind (John 7:37; 14:26; 16:13).

The Spirit's coming was necessary because of the incarnation limitations of Jesus (John 16).

The Spirit's coming was dependent on Jesus' glorification and could not come until He was glorified (John 7:39).

**Historical reality:** The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

Pentecost was the "*Feast of Firstfruits*" or "*The feast of Harvest*" or the "*Feast of Weeks*," and it took place in June, fifty days after the first Sabbath of the Passover in the Jewish month of Sivan. It was a popular feast because the weather was travel friendly.

It was the dawn of a new age, an age of the Spirit where men were being led to share in the blessing of the age to come (Ephesians 1:3). The eschatological event was thrust into time in advance of the cataclysmic entrance of the kingdom of God into history.

On that day, the gospel was preached: ***The Pentecost saints did not preach their experience, but testified of Christ.*** They spoke of His person and history. Notice the first preacher's message:

He proclaimed the history of Christ:

- His life, v. 22
- His death, v. 23

- His resurrection, v. 24
- His exalted life, v. 32-36
- He proclaimed one benefit-forgiveness v. 38
- He demanded a response.

Conclusion: The Holy Spirit energized the development of the history of the Lord Jesus Christ. He revealed the meaning of the Gospel and how men should respond to this good news. He is active among men today witnessing to the truth, preserving it under attack and leading men to believe in the Gospel as truth.

## **THE SPIRIT'S MINISTRY TO BELIEVERS**

Establishing the wonderful and holy history of Christ was the great work of the Spirit. Jesus is Lord. He is destined to rule the kingdom of God in righteousness, peace, and joy forever.

The second great work of the Spirit is uniting believers with the history of Christ, so they can share in His life and glory. This uniting with the holy history of Jesus destines all believers to co-share in the benefits of His life and death. This sharing of the life of Christ becomes the Christian's security, the basis of unity, hope of exaltation with Him, and a life-long challenge of servicing the gospel (Ephesians 1:3; Romans 6:3,4; <sup>NIV</sup>Hebrews 3:1,2).

### **THE SPIRIT'S OBJECTIVE MINISTRY TOWARD THE BELIEVER**

The following ministries are positional, outside the believer's experience. They are known only by revelation:

**The pre-salvation ministry of the Spirit:** The sanctifying work of the God draws men and leads them to examine Christ and trust Him for their salvation. The Spirit guides them into a direct encounter with the Gospel so they can be justified, cleansed, and regenerated (1 Peter 1: 1-2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14).

**The baptizing ministry of the Spirit:** In this work, the Spirit of God (a) identifies a believer with the life and victorious history of Christ so that He is no longer identified with Adam's sin and defeat, and (b) he unites them with Christ and God's people. The Spirit baptizes or places all Christians into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). The baptism of the Spirit is not an ecstatic experience but a truth known only by revelation.

**The sealing ministry of the Spirit:** A seal is a mark or impression on a document showing ownership, identity, and authenticity, and authority says Dwight Pentecost (Divine Comforter). The seal of the Spirit is a guarantee that the believer belongs to God (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:22), and that he has a right to the future redemption of the body. It implies dearness (Song of Solomon 8:6) and authenticity (1 Corinthians 9:2).

### **THE SPIRIT'S SUBJECTIVE MINISTRY TOWARDS THE BELIEVER**



- **Regenerating:** He regenerates men, that is, he imparts spiritual life by uniting him to the life of Christ (Titus 3:5; John 3).
- **Indwelling:** He indwells men and takes up residence within men making them a temple of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17; 1 Corinthians 6:18ff; Ephesians 2:12-22).
- **Leading:** He leads men (Galatians 5:18; Ephesians 5:18). To lead is to guide and it is translated: "*brought*" (Matthew 10:18; John 1:42), "*kept*" (Matthew 14:6), "*be going*," "go" (Matthew 26:46; Mark 1:38), and "*lead*" (Mark 13:11).
- **Anointing:** He anoints men (2 Corinthians 1:21-22), that is, he appoints men to special service.
- **Gifting:** He gives gifts to men (1 Corinthians 12:3ff). The dispensing of the gifts of grace is a work of the Holy Spirit and it is done according to His will. He equips every believer with one or more abilities designed to perpetuate the gospel and build up the body of Christ.
- **Empowering:** He empowers service (Acts 1:8), that is, he supernaturally empowers men to serve the gospel of Christ.
- **Sanctifying:** He sanctifies Holiness is a work of the Spirit whereby He points men to Christ; to the resources they share in Him, and works to conform them to His image (2 Corinthians 3:18).
- **Interceding:** He intercedes He discerns the real needs of believers and interprets their prayers making them effective before God (Romans 8:26-27).
- **Teaching:** He teaches. He taught the disciples and he continues to enlighten men to the truth of the gospel (1 John 2:27).
- **Glorifying:** He glorifies. Glorification is a present work in the spirit related to sanctification, and it is a future work related to the glorification of the body. He presently beautifies the Christian making them more like Christ, and one day He will make them like Christ physically (2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 1 John 3:1,2; Romans 8:22-30).

It is the work of Christ at Calvary that saves a man, not the work of the Holy Spirit within the man that saves him. Salvation is first objective, then subjective.

### **THE BELIEVER'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE SPIRIT**

Central to the Christian life is maintaining a close relationship with the Holy Spirit. To the degree that the believer draws on the resources of the Spirit, to that degree will he be effective:

- **Be filled with the Spirit** (Ephesians 5:18): The word "filled" is figure of speech for "be controlled." This is a continuous process, a reoccurring experience. The Colossians 3 passage has the same language, but uses the term "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." implying that to have a relationship with the Spirit, one must also have a relationship with the Word of God.
- **Walk in the Spirit** (Galatians 5:16, 25). The idea here is to keep in step with the Spirit.

- **Grieve not the Spirit** (Ephesians 4:30): This is love term implying that one should not grieve or hurt the Spirit. One can grieve the Spirit by saying “yes” when sin knocks at the door (Ephesians 4:30; Romans 14:17).
- **Quench not the Spirit** (1 Thessalonians 5:19): This refers to an act of the believer squelching the voice or leading of God’s Spirit. One can quench the Spirit by saying “No” to His leading.

A *spirit-filled Christian* is recognized by three fruits: Christ-like character (Galatians 5:22); Allegiance to truth because He is the “Spirit of Truth;” and, obedience to truth (1 John 2:3, 4).

## THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT

*1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

**Many** long for esoteric power and special spiritual abilities that were manifested in the New Testament era. In so doing, many a saint has agonized in prayer to obtain “*the baptism of the Spirit*.”

**Others** feel like they have had an exclusive, overwhelming experience of such force, they feel like they are part of an elite, spiritual aristocracy. But, the baptism of the Spirit is something altogether different.

**Definition:** The baptism of the Spirit is an act whereby the Spirit places the believer into the body of Christ to share in the benefits of His accomplishment. It is **not** an ecstatic experience, an infusion of power, an irresistible force, or endowment with tongues. It is **not** a sensual experience. The Baptism of the Spirit is only defined in one verse in the Bible (1 Corinthians 12:12, 13). ***The baptism of the Spirit is the work of the Spirit whereby He unites the believer to Christ and to other believers in one body. It is His placement of the believer into the community of the redeemed.***

- It is a spiritual blessing, because it unites us to the life of Christ and therefore have the potential to walk in newness of life having a capacity to override the power of the body (Romans 6:3-6).
- It is a positional blessing, because it is unfelt, unexperienced, and unknown except for revelation.
- It is a universal truth because all believers are so baptized.
- It happens when a person believes in Christ.

It is **not** the same thing as “*being filled*” with the Spirit. The “*baptism of the Spirit*” happens only once; the “*filling*” of the Spirit may happen many times. The “*baptism*” is a positional truth; the “*filling*” is an existential truth. The “*baptism*” happens at the moment of salvation according to the will of the Spirit; the “*filling*” happens in conjunction with man’s obedience, and may be experienced all throughout life.

## THE SEALING OF THE SPIRIT

In Ephesians 1:13, 14, the word “*sealed*” (evsfragi,sqhte) is an aorist passive verb indicating that this is something that has happened to the believer. A *seal* means “to mark,” “approve,” or “to secure,” or “to

own as the truth.” A seal in human terms is a tool to make a mark to attest a signature or to certify ownership.

**Ownership is the key concept behind the word *seal*.** King Ahasuerus gave Esther permission to write a letter and to use his seal giving the Jews permission to defend themselves against Haman’s wicked decree that the Jews should be destroyed:

*“Now write another decree in the king's name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring -- for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked” (Esther 8:8).*

**Protection is another concept behind the word *sealed*.** God placed an invisible mark on the foreheads of the righteous so they would not be destroyed by the destroyers ordered to execute the wicked idolaters in the City of Jerusalem during the Babylonian invasion of the land: “Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it . . . Slay utterly old *and* young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near *any man upon whom is the mark* (a *Tav*);” (Ezekiel 9:4, 6).

**Security is another concept behind the word *sealed*.** A sealed object was protected by the power and authority of the owner. **King Darius** under pressure of his officials ordered Daniel to be placed in the lion’s den. Both the king and his officials placed their seals on a mud adhesive on the stone covering the mouth of the den to attest to the authority of the Persians over the prison in order to dissuade any who might try to rescue Daniel from the pit: “A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed” (Daniel 6:17).

However, the “*sealing of the Spirit*” is **not** an experience. The seal cannot be seen with the human eye. It is an invisible mark known only to the Lord God (Revelation 7 and 14).

## **SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

**Spiritual gifts are “abilities”** that God gives to his children for the nurturing and care of his people. They are not the same as *natural abilities* such as singing or speaking, but they are integrated into the make-up and experience of the Christian so as to be almost indistinguishable.

**Spiritual gifts are different than ministries.** A ministry is a sphere of influence. A gift is the ability to serve and produce growth in that ministry. The gift appears to be accompanied by varying degrees of manifestations and affects (1 Corinthians 13:3ff).

- All believers are gifted (Romans 12:7ff).
- No gift is unnecessary (1 Corinthians 12:15).
- No part is self-sufficient (1 Corinthians 12:21).
- Some gifts are more important than others (1 Corinthians 12:27).
- Gifts can be gained or added to throughout life (1 Corinthians 14:1).

- There are at least two problems that surface among believers related to spiritual gifts.
- An attitude of inferiority (1 Corinthians 12:15).
- An attitude of superiority (1 Corinthians 12:21).
- A misunderstanding of gifts: Gifts are not for personal edification, but for the edification of the body (1 1 Corinthians 14:1-5).

## **RULES FOR THE USE OF GIFTS**

(1 Corinthians 14):

- Only activities that edify may be done in a church gathering (v. 26).
- No more than two or three people may speak in a service (v. 27, 29).
- An interpreter must be present if a prophet is speaking in a foreign language (v. 27, 28).
- If there is no interpreter, the invigorated men must remain silent (v. 28).
- Revelation and gift are to have first priority in speaking to the church (v. 30).
- There must be a procedure, an order of speaking (v. 31).
- Women are commanded to keep silent in church meetings as well as most of the men (v. 14:34).
- Women are to ask questions to their husbands at home - - not in the church (v. 35).
- Do not forbid the speaking in tongues (v. 39).
- Do all things decently and orderly (v. 40).

## **GLOSSARY OF THE GIFTS**

**Apostle** (1 Corinthians 12:28): The word means “sent one” or “messenger.” To be an apostle, one had to have seen Jesus personally after His resurrection (Acts 1:21-22) or be closely associated with an Apostle, like Barnabus. The apostles were given the responsibility of laying the doctrinal foundation of the church and were given special powers to authenticate their authority (2 Corinthians 12:12).

A secondary sense of the word may mean “sent one;” that is, one who is sent to do a special work for God. Some have conjectured that missionaries are like apostles, but it doesn't appear to be the same in authority or status.

**Prophecy**: (Romans 12:6): The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20). A prophet was one who had a message from God. It was an authoritative, fresh revelation from God. He had the ability to send a bullet to the heart of an issue with clarity and conviction.

There are no prophecy today, nor are there prophets receiving special revelation from God. In a secondary sense, some men are gifted at slicing the cake in just the right place; to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable; to bring the right message at the right time.

**Evangelism** (Ephesians 4:11): this gift is a person graced with a love for the lost, with discernment of salvation issues, with special abilities to proclaim the message of Christ, and to win secular men to Christ.

**Pastor-teacher** (Ephesians 4:11): This gift appears to be a person with a position in the body of Christ. They are “shepherds” with a special love for the flock and ability to teach the Word of God. They have the ability to minister truth with clarity and conviction to the heart and soul of the flock.

**Teachers** (Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28): A gifted teacher is not necessarily a person with the gift of gab or one who occupies a teaching position at a college or high school. These men have a special relationship with truth. They have a love of study and the ability to enlighten men with their insights from God's Word so that others hunger for and grow in understanding and knowledge.

**Exhortation:** (Romans 12:8): the word can be translated “comfort, console, entreat, beg, implore, and counsel.” In essence, it is the gift of prodding, of comforting, of motivating. It strengthens the weak, reassures the wavering, and buffets the stubborn.

**Knowledge:** (1 Corinthians 12:8): this gift appears to be one where the person has the ability to research, organize, synthesize, and summarize the truth of Scripture. This person usually has studied and perceptive insights into the meaning of ordinary and difficult subjects. These people may have a broad understanding of history, science, language, archaeology, theology, geography, and general life experiences.

**The Word of wisdom:** (1 Corinthians 12:8): not unrelated to the gift of knowledge, the word of wisdom appears to be the ability to practically apply a truth to a given life-circumstance. These people make knowledge acceptable. They are people-problem solvers.

**Helps:** (1 Corinthians 12:28): this is a gift related to serving. This person has the ability to see practical needs of people and apply himself to meeting those needs joyfully and without complaint. These people love to serve, help, assist, and comfort those with a need.

**Hospitality:** (1 Peter 4:9): these people love strangers and have the ability to use their resources (food and shelter) to welcoming guests and newcomers within the community (Romans 12:13; Titus 1:8; Hebrews 13:2; Matthew 25:35).

**Giving:** (Romans 12:8): This gift is, perhaps, the God-given ability to earn money and to advance God's work by sharing their financial resources with God's servants (Acts 4:34-37).

**Government or ruling** (Romans 12:8): This is the ability to plan, organize, administrate, and lead a company of God's people towards the purposes of the gospel.

**Mercy** (Romans 12:8): This is the ability to have genuine concern and compassion that moves one to encourage and aid the distressed, poor, ill, deprived, and handicapped in ways that practically minister to people.

**Tongues** (1 Corinthians 12:28, 29): These people have/had the ability to speak the gospel in an unlearned language to unbelievers in order to rapidly spread the gospel in the first century. It does not appear to be

an active gift today. All missionaries spend years studying a language before sharing a Biblical message with native peoples.

**Interpretation of tongues:** (1 Corinthians 14:27-28): This is the ability to hear a message in a foreign language, to understand it, and to translate it into the known language of the people.

**Leading:** (Romans 12:8): The ability to motivate others with wisdom, humility, and efficiency so that others grow and work together toward a common goal.

### **Q: HOW CAN I KNOW MY GIFT?**

One can begin to learn about their spiritual gift by discovering the answers to the following questions:

- What spiritual desires pound away inside your heart? Desire may be the first indication that the Spirit is at work. Some people love to serve; others love to organize events; others love to share Christ with non-Christians; others listen and come along side those in conflict.
- What do you enjoy doing for Christ?
- What have you seen blessing and fruit for doing?
- What do mature men in the faith say about your spiritual gift?

## **THE ERROR OF AN ALLEGED SECOND BLESSING**

Certain passages in the book of Acts appear to teach that not all believers have the power of the Spirit and that the power of the Spirit comes only to special individuals after a great yielding. These people teach that those who experienced the “*baptism of the Spirit*” spoke in tongues. Are not tongues a sign of having the Spirit? Is not the “baptism of the Spirit” a second blessing that happens after a believer yields to Christ?

While it is true that some groups in Acts experienced a delay between their decision of faith and “*the baptism of the Spirit*” (Acts 8, 20), **not** all did (Acts 10). The delays between belief in the gospel and the indwelling of the Spirit were necessary so the believing community could identify themselves with the mainstream of the church. When the gospel crossed into the borders of Samaria, this was no minor event. A great division existed between the Jews and Samaritans. When the apostles saw that the Samaritans believed and received the Spirit, the apostles knew the gospel was not just for Jews, but for the whole world. Likewise, when Peter saw the first Gentile convert in Caesarea, the apostles were jolted into perceiving this gospel was for all men, **not** just for Jews. Without this wait-time and witness, there would have been early factions in the church (See Acts 8). Delays, therefore, were not normal, but the abnormal experience.

All true believers have the Spirit. If they do not have the Spirit, they do not belong to Christ (Romans 8:5ff). While all have the Spirit, not all are filled with the Spirit. Many Christians are carnally minded (1 Corinthians 3). What is needed is **not** a second blessing, **but** obedient Christians who seek to live and walk by the Spirit. And, a Spirit-filled Christian will obey the Word of God (Romans 6:17; Philippians 2:12; Isaiah 8:20).

## THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

The Charismatic Movement began in the 1960's and 70's and is sometimes called the second or third wave of the Spirit—a moderate fruit of Pentecostalism. It is also known as “the Signs and Wonders” cavalcade. It contains the belief that there is a second blessing more powerful than justification and the regenerative work of the Spirit. T

he Charismatic thesis is a complete negation of justification by faith. It places a priority on *subjective* experiences at the expense of *objective* achievements of Christ at Calvary. It denigrates *justification* and places an undo emphasis on *sanctification*. It de-emphasizes the believer's *legal status* in favor of a subjective experience; that is, Charismatics fall into the same error as Catholics by placing a priority on the Spirit's work *in us* rather than on Christ's work *for us*, outside of us, at the cross. The Charismatic movement is *man-centered* rather than *Christ-centered*; *subjective* rather than *objective*; *carnal* rather than *spiritual*. In short, the Charismatic Movement represents ALL that is wrong with Christianity today. It is a Pandora's Box with all kinds of evils creeping out of it.

The Pentecostal post-conversion “*baptism*” of the Spirit implies that God's act of justification is **not** sufficient to bring the infilling of the Spirit. If God's act of justifying a man, His greatest work on behalf of a sinner, is **not** sufficient to qualify the man for a filling of the Spirit, what else is? The psychological gimmicks of “*Letting go*,” “*total surrender*,” and “*emptying*” undermine the justifying work of Christ and *must be firmly rejected!!*

The Pentecostal teaching that *the baptism of the Spirit is greater than* or more beneficial than justification which comes by faith undermines the gospel. Charismatics talk about one's alleged experiences with the Spirit as greater than the gift of justification. It is like being gifted a million bucks and then rejoicing that one finds a dollar in the parking lot.

Pentecostals give the *false impression that the Spirit gives greater gifts than Christ*; that Christ is not presented as a complete gift; that receiving the Spirit is more important than receiving Christ as Lord and Savior. Such gibberish depreciates God's gift of His Son. The great gospel message is not a baptism of the Spirit but that everything belongs to Christ and that believers are complete in Him (Colossians 1:15-2:10).

Pentecostalism errs by creating *two classes of citizens in the church*: the haves and the have-nots. Such boasting is arrogant and proud. That is, Pentecostalism is divisive, not only of dividing the body of Christ, but bifurcating the gospel.

Pentecostalism is *highly Catholic in its progress*. The Reformation corrected the Catholic perversion of the gospel by emphasizing God's work for us in Christ rather than God's work in us by the Holy Spirit; by refocusing a generation on the Christ of history rather than on man in time; by rescuing men from looking *within* and helping them focus on Christ *without*. **Subjectivism** is a bottomless pit and only the cross can save a man from journeying in and in and in and in to inspect his own wretched condition. Furthermore, break-out of Charismatic folly like “holy-laughter” and “jerking” and “stuttering” and “slaying in the spirit” are nothing but wretched, fleshly, grotesque distortions of spirituality so close to the poisonous tree you can hear the snake hissing.

## CHARISMATIC CONFUSION

When the Charismatic Movement sprang to life in the mid-sixties, it moved from the prayer closet into the mainstream of the public consciousness. Charismatics emphasize private encounters with Jesus. Healings, speaking in tongues, visions, and a host of other experiences are reported. At the epicenter of the Movement is the “baptism of the Spirit,” which is followed by “speaking in tongues.” Christianity finds itself divided between the “haves” and the “have-nots.”

Personal note: For years, I studied the Movement. Though I was one of the “have-nots,” I was able to listen to the claims and observe the lifestyles of many of its leaders. Though some of my Charismatic friends are responsible Christians, I saw that the Movement was not what it was cracked up to be. It was fatally flawed, and its fruits were sour—sour because they were berries attached to the poisonous tree.

**1. Charismatics are confused about the place of experience in the Christian life.** They are the victims of *wretched subjectivism*—the worst kind of subjectivism, *religious subjectivism*. Their own experience is the epicenter of their concerns. Like Adam's first speech after the fall, “*I heard . . . I was afraid . . . I was naked . . . I hid myself,*” the Charismatic experience is all about the “me” in men.

The religious Movement shares much in common with Eastern religions that take you “*in and in and in, and then you go in, and in, and in, And after that you go in and in and in and in and in.*” Subjectivism makes men prisoners of themselves. God's cure for subjectivism is the objective gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). True Christianity takes man outside himself to view the wonder of Another.

**2. Charismatics are confused about authority.** Not only are Charismatics drowning in the sea of subjectivism, their personal experience has usurped authority in their thinking over the Word of God; i.e. they place their experience above the Word of God. This is the most frustrating fact about Charismatics. No matter what you show them in the Scripture, they will not question their experience, “By golly, I felt the Spirit move from the top of my head to the bottom of my toes, and I knows it's real!” says the Charismatic.

This is a far cry from what Scripture teaches, “Let God be true, and every man a liar” (Romans 3:4). Because our feelings and thoughts lie to us, we must constantly evaluate them by the truth, the Word of God. The Word of God, not human experience, is the final authority on matters pertaining to God. This is not to say that experiences do not have a place in the Christian life, they do. But, experience must surrender to a higher authority, the Holy Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:18-21).

**3. Charismatics are confused about “visions.”** I cannot recall how many “visions” and “words of knowledge” that I heard and were reported to me. While I remained dubious, Charismatic treated these prophetic messages as gospel—as high as or higher than Revelation. In one service I attended, the group spent the entire service listening to prophetic messages. Not once was the Bible opened. Who needs a Bible when God speaks to you directly? Their confidence astounded me! Not only do Charismatics not question these “visions,” they considered them equal to or Superior to the Scriptures. “If these “visions” were from God,” I asked, “why were they not written down and added to the New Testament?” They did not have a good answer.

**The cure for “visions”** is to realize that God's greatest revelation is the gift of his Son (Hebrews 1:1-3). Godly men are not swept away by trances, visions, or revelations. They vigorously study the Scripture to discover Christ and the principles by which they can live life accurately. An emphasis on visions undermines the importance and authority of God's Word. It is the Devil's Carnival Cruiser and the mature Christian will take another ship.



**4. Charismatics are confused about “tongues.”** The Biblical phenomenon of speaking in tongues (glw/ssai) was a supernatural ability to speak the gospel in a language one never studied. Biblical tongues were designed to expedite the spread of the Gospel into the Roman world during the Apostolic Period. The modern Charismatic Phenomenon has nothing to do with “languages” or the “gospel” or “Biblical love.” It has everything to do with “self-edification” and “self-love” (1 Corinthians 14: 4)!! In fact, tongues is closer to self-eroticism than it is to Biblical love.

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul does not promote “*self-edification*,” he condemns it! The context, by the way, is not one’s private prayer life, but the assembly of the church. The goal of church fellowship is not “*personal edification*” but edification of the brotherhood. For example: Let us say a Chinese believer came into a gathering of believers and asked to speak. If no one understands Chinese, will others be encouraged? The Chinese guy may feel terrific, but the rest of us would be left “holding the bag.” Self-edification is at odds with the purpose of edifying the church, and self-edification is condemned in this passage—not approved!

The modern tongues Movement fails to measure up to Biblical standards. In the research by **John Kildahl** (1972), *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues* (Harper & Row), a theologian, a linguist, and a psychologist were employed to study the Charismatic Movement by the American Psychological Association.

*The linguist* recorded hundreds of tongues messages by the leading tongues advocates from the major denominations. The linguist reported that not only were no known languages identified, but not one criteria of a language was observed. In short, these tongues speakers were simply using monosyllabic jibber-jabber or baby talk. This is a far cry from Acts 2 where languages were employed with dignity to communicate the gospel: “Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome Cretans and Arabs -- we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own *language*!” (2:9). The tragedy is that Charismatics accept the modern counterfeit tongues Movement as genuine, and then have the gall to use Scripture to support it (Kildahl, 1972).

**5. Charismatics are confused about how to interpret and apply Scripture.** The goal of Bible study for a Charismatic is not to learn what the Bible says, but to have God speak to them through the Bible. They have a “what does it mean to me” method instead of “what does the Bible say” method to Bible study. This spontaneous approach to reading the Scriptures leaves them open to all kinds of strange and counterfeit interpretations. “Unholy laughter” and “slaying in the spirit” being an example of the nonsense coming out of Charismatics meetings. God’s Word was spoken in an historical, cultural context. While much in Scripture can be applied to one’s own life, the first fundamental principal of hermeneutics is to discover what Scripture says and what it meant to the original readers. After that, a believer may be in a position to make a proper application.

For example, a Charismatic friend of mine read the account of Isaac’s marriage to Rebekah. When he came across Genesis 24:7, he felt God was telling him to marry the only single woman in his church. “God spoke to him.” After his divorce several years later, I asked him if “God spoke to him” about divorcing his wife. He confirmed he had “a prophetic Word from the Lord” on the matter. Confused? Charismatics are confused, befuddled, bewildered folks.

**6. Charismatics are confused about the place of miracles in the Bible.** Charismatics tend to see a miracle sprouting behind every bush. Many gauge their spiritual stature on the quantity of miracles they

experience. When miracles abound they are excited, when miracles are sparse they are depressed. Those who see daily miracles are the super-saints and those who have lingering health or financial problems are second-class saints, inferior, deeply flawed, faithless members in the community.

Surprisingly to some, **miracles are rare in the Bible**. Were the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Barak, Samson, Samuel, David, Solomon, Isaiah, and Jeremiah filled with miracles? There are only **three great periods of miracles** in the Bible: during the time of Moses and Joshua (1400 B.C.), during the time of Elijah and Elisha (800 B.C.), and during the time of Christ and the apostles (29-70 AD). Between these periods, miracles were sparse.

Why did God perform miracles during the time of Moses? Would you have followed Moses out of Egypt and risked the wrath of Pharaoh if Moses had not performed miracles to authenticate his calling?

Why did God perform miracles during the time of Elijah? Would you have followed Elijah and Elisha during the dark night of Ahab's reign if they had not convinced you by their miracles that they were prophets of YHWH? Following YHWH meant resisting and opposing wicked King Ahab and his tyrannical, government. Their miracles were used to authenticate their ministry in order to lead people out of the darkness of Baalism and into the light of YHWH.

Why did God perform miracles during the time of Christ? If a man off the street came to you and said he was the Son of God would you believe him? Christ announced his Sonship and his miracles authenticated his claims. Christ's miracles were his credentials to show the Jews that He was indeed God's Messiah, "the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me" ( John 5:36).

What Charismatics need to understand is that miracles are rare and few. When miracles came in clumps, it was because God was credentialing His servant in preparation for new direction in God's economy. Usually, because God's man was doing a new work in history. **God authenticated the man** and his message to germinate confidence in God's people—confidence enough to follow His prophet. But, God is no longer authenticating the ministry of men through miracles. A man's credentials today are his character, his knowledge, and his good works (James 3:13).

**7. Charismatics are confused about spirituality.** They seek instant touchy-feely spirituality through ecstatic experiences. True spirituality is **not** evidenced by "miracles" or "visions" or "speaking in tongues." The fruit of the Spirit springs from spirituality: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23). In other words, the exhibition of Christ-like character under severe testing bears witness to the depth of one's spirituality. God uses testing to develop character as well as to expose it. Many Charismatics seek deliverance, not endurance. They want out of the trial, not grace in the trial.

When I think of spirituality, I think of a man who was married to a difficult woman. As she aged, she developed a form of Alheimers and became more and more irritable. Suffering from a chemical imbalance, she was impossible to live with. She screamed, demanded attention, argued constantly, and would not do housework. The kids could not stand to be around her and advised their dad to divorce their mother. Every day before this man went to work, he made the bed and fixed her breakfast. When he came home in the evening, he fixed her dinner, cleaned the house, and ironed her clothes. This went on for five years. After the woman died, one of the adult children came to his dad and said, "Dad, because of you, I now know what character is all about." This is true spirituality.

For this and other reasons, the psychologist in the **Kildahl study** reported that “tongues” speakers *tended to regress in maturity* following their tongues experience; i.e. the logical, common sense approach to life was diminished (p. 55). The movement is full of people with mental and emotional and relational problems. Many a church has been split because of the Movement’s divisive, sour fruit.

Conclusion: Charismatics are confused! One can die in a fire as well as on ice. You can get killed driving too fast on the freeway as well as driving too slow. Dead orthodoxy dries out the spirit, but the Charismatic fever exhausts it. The human tendency is to forget the objective and to gravitate back to the subjective. God’s solution to man’s subjectivism is the cross of Calvary. There is no higher truth than Christ crucified. God does not redeem us by something in our experience, he redeems us by the experience of His Son. When the Spirit of God is at work in our lives, we are led to Calvary to understand God’s great work outside of us. The Spirit-filled man does not speak of his experiences, he speaks about the glorious achievements of Christ. He does not seek visions and ecstatic feelings, he seeks to understand the Word of God (John 16:13, 14; Acts 2:22; 2 Peter 1:3-10).

Charismatics are not to be despised, but understood, loved, and rebuked. If God allows, the objective Christian can be used to help the Charismatic to achieve spiritual balance in their spiritual quest to know Him and the power of his resurrection.

If you or any of your friends feel pulled toward the tornado of the Charismatic Movement, my advice is to keep your head down, down in the Scriptures until the whirlwind passes. Maintain your objectivity, and do not allow yourself to be sucked into the black hole of wretched, religious subjectivism. Feed on the sweetness of Jesus, and do not let yourself be mesmerized by the Charismatic confusion.

See John McArthur’s work, “Strange Fire.”

## **Q: ARE TONGUES FOR TODAY?**

Linguistic Data:

- *glossa* is tongue the common word for language (Acts 2:3).
- *dialektos* means tongue. (Acts 2:8). In Acts 21:40, the Hebrew language is labeled a dialect.
- *Heteroglossos* means “other tongue” or foreign language.

The gift of tongues was a supernatural God given ability to speak a foreign language without having to study the language for the purpose of the rapid spread of the gospel. It was not given for personal edification. It was given to expedite the gospel into the Hellenized world in the first century (Read 1 Corinthians 14 carefully).

It was not a childish, monosyllabic jibber-jabber. It was an intelligible language (Acts 2: 1-10). Note the English word “language” in verse six. It is the Greek word *dialektos* from which we acquire the term “dialect.” Note the languages mentioned: Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome,

Notice Paul's use of angel's tongues in 1 Corinthians 14. This is was not jibber-jabber or baby talk, but a heavenly language, an angelic tongue. Paul is using the phrase "tongues of angels" as a hyperbole to stress the extent of knowledge without love (1 Corinthians 14:1ff). He exaggerates the possibilities to emphasize the wretched condition of lacking love; that is, a person who perhaps might even speak a language known to angels, if he does not have love, he is as far from spirituality as east is from west.

Tongues was a real, historical gift used in the early church. However, the "tongues movement" today is a *cultural phenomenon* unrelated to the Biblical gift. The cultural phenomenon is a hoax, an imitation of the NT expression.

### **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON TONGUES**

**Research by John Kildahl (1972):** Kildahl obtained a grant to study tongues, and then published his report: *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues*. New York: Harper and Row. His study was funded by the Behavior Science Research Branch of the National Institute of Mental Health. A theologian, a psychologist, and a linguist were employed. They studied thousands of tongues speakers in major denominations across America in the late sixties and early seventies. Here are some of the discoveries (Kildahl, 1972):

- Nothing is recorded in the writing of the early church fathers about the phenomenon of glossolalia.
- Nothing is recorded in the Middle Ages about the use of this gift.
- The Glossolalia Movement began in 1906, at 312 Azusa Street, by W.J. Seymour, a Negro minister in Los Angeles, California. His experiences at this church launched the Pentecostal Movement across America.
- The charismatic tongues experience arises from within the subconscious, not the ego.
- It is a form of hypnotism. All persons involved in the tongues movement the research team studied possessed a high degree of hypnotic susceptibility. The experience is like being bewitched.
- Glossolalists are people with a submissive nature and co-dependent on authority figures for meaning and security. According to the tests, they have a need to be dominated.
- Glossolalists must feel a close tie to their leader or they did not or could not enter into the experience.
- The linguists on the research team reported was absolutely not one criteria for a language met by the hundreds of taped tongues sessions recorded.
- Eighty-five percent of the tongues speakers had a crisis before entering into the experience.
- Tongues speakers tended to regress towards lower levels of maturity during and following their experience; that is, they became childish and infantile in their behavior.
- On group behavior: over one third of the groups split after their subjective experience. Each group practiced histrionic display; that is, they imitated the characteristics of their leader.

### **Q: ARE ALL GIFTS FUNCTIONING TODAY?**

The word “*charismatic*” refers to people who are “gifted” by the Holy Spirit. In one sense, all believers are biblical Charismatics, but not all believers are cultural Charismatics. Cultural Charismatics believe all the gifts are operational today.

There are four reasons why the “sign gifts” are no longer operational.

- The Bible promised that tongues would disappear (1 Corinthians 13:9-11).
- The gift of tongues is no longer needed now that the church has matured. The word “perfect” (to. te,leion) (13:10) means “mature” (14:20). Once the foundation was laid, built on the foundation of the apostles, tongues disappeared. You don’t need to keep pouring cement once the foundation of a house has been laid. You start erecting wooden headers and footers.
- The appearance of great sign gifts go unmentioned throughout church history until the first part of the 20th century. Though there has been a revival of supernaturalism in the Charismatic Movement, its authenticity is not only greatly disputable but its claims are bogus, deceitful, dishonest, distorted, fake, erroneous, and fraudulent!!
- There is no scientific evidence that anyone possesses the Biblical gift of tongues.

This does **not** mean, however, that God does not or cannot perform miracles today or that we live in a closed system where God’s power is no longer manifested. **God forbid!** He is able and willing to act on behalf of His children. But the purpose of authenticating miracles has ceased, and it is safe to say that the *age of authenticating miracles* passed with the apostles.

The purpose of miracles was to substantiate the authority of a prophet; to lead God’s people into a new dispensation. That purpose is no longer needed. What is needed today is not miracles, but Reformation; a return to Biblical truth; the development of Christian character, the reproduction of Christ’s image in the profile of believers.

### **TRUE SPIRITUALITY**

What is needed today is not Christians who seek a spiritual experiences or who substitute spirituality for sensuality or who replace objectivity with subjectivity.

Needed are true believers who say “No” to the flesh, and say “Yes” to God’s Spirit. The spiritual man is governed by principle, not emotion; by objective standards, not subjective experience; by character, not circumstance; by the Word of God, not his belly button. To this end God’s spirit labors. Will men cooperate?

## **THE SPIRIT OF THE ESCHATON**

A private came to his captain and said, “I have taken a prisoner.” “Great,” said the officer, “Bring him to me.” “He won’t come,” replied the soldier. “Then come yourself,” ordered the captain. “I can’t. He won’t let me” was the man’s final reply.

I hate to say it, but a great deal of Christian victory is no deeper than this. Sin seems to have more power over us than Christ Himself.

Who among us does not feel the need for more power in his Christian life? The word “power” comes from the Greek word *dunamis* (du,namis). Our word *dynamite* is derived from this word. Jesus said, “You shall receive *dunamis* after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you” (Acts 1:8). However, the bang in our Christian life is more like that of a small firecracker than a stick of dynamite. Who among us does not yearn for something deeper, something more powerful than the reality of our dull, weak, day-to-day struggle? No doubt, our need is to tap into the mighty resources of God’s Spirit.

You can have greater power in your life by being filled with the Spirit of God.

**The Spirit created the heavens and the earth.** The first mention of the Spirit is in Genesis 1:2, “*And the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters.*” The word “Spirit” (~yhil{a/ x;Wrw) comes from the Hebrew word *ruah* meaning “wind,” “scent,” “breath,” or “mind.” Since “heavens and earth” is attributed to his work there is no power shortage here.

After Adam fell and creation fell with him, history was subject to death, decay, destruction, rust, oxidation, and corrosion. Can the fall ever be reversed? The answer is found in the hope of the kingdom of God. The ancients saw a day when all that was lost in the fall would be restored by a redemptive act of God. This restoration is called “*Paradise Regained*,” “*The kingdom of God*,” “*the age to come*,” or “*the Eschaton*.” The Agent of this restoration is the Spirit of God.

Isaiah saw the seven spirits resting on the Messiah. The number “seven” symbolizes the “fullness of God.”

*Isaiah 11:2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.*

Isaiah saw a day when the Spirit of the Eschaton would restore the Earth like the Garden of Eden.

*Isaiah 32:15 Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.*

Isaiah saw a day when the Spirit of God would regenerate men.

*Isaiah 44:3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my **spirit** upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.*

Isaiah’s vision was a revelation of the Eschaton—a time in the future when the Spirit of God would restore what was lost in the fall (Acts 3:21).

**The Spirit of the Eschaton created the body of Christ.** God’s Son arrived in history through a creative act by the Holy Spirit.

*Luke 1:35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*

**The Spirit of the Eschaton empowered the ministry of Christ.** When Jesus entered his ministry, the Spirit of the Eschaton led Jesus into the desert to be tested by Satan. After he passed His temptation, the Spirit anointed him with power (Matthew 4:1; Luke 3:22). He declared, “The Spirit is upon me” (Luke

4:18). He preached about the kingdom of God, and people began to taste of the powers of the age to come (Matthew 8-9; Hebrews 6:2-4). As the Spirit of God moved through Christ the lame walked, the blind saw, the deaf heard, the dead were raised, and the seas were calmed.

The fact that Jesus was casting out demons by the Spirit of God demonstrated that the powers of the Eschaton arrived in history in and through the ministry of Christ (Matthew 12:28).

**The Spirit of the Eschaton raised Jesus from the dead.** The resurrection is an eschatological event. Jesus said,

*“The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection” (Luke 20:34-36).*

No doubt the death of Jesus removed all hope from among the disciples. But, the resurrection completely reversed their shattered dreams. Since the resurrection belongs to the age to come, the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead meant that the Eschaton had arrived in history. Jesus was the firstfruits of a new kind of existence—the firstfruits in a whole harvest to come (1 Corinthians 15:20).

The Spirit of the Eschaton is promised to believers.

*John 15:26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.*

The Spirit is called the “*Comforter*” (ο` παρακλητορ, paraclete) meaning “one who stands alongside a defendant during the course of a court trial.” He stands in relation to us as an attorney stands in relation to his client in a court of law.

**The Spirit of the Eschaton is regenerating men now.** The Spirit arrived during the Feast of Pentecost around 32 A.D. To the crowd that was stunned by the radical change in the disciples, Peter announced that the eschatological Spirit promised by Joel had arrived in the middle of history instead of at the end of history to fill and indwell believers (Acts 2:17, 38).

Regeneration means “*to make alive*.” Regeneration is a tangible reality necessary to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3; Titus 3:5). First, a man is declared righteous (justified), then he is made righteous (regeneration). He is *first declared holy, then he is made holy*. To enter the age of regeneration later, a man must be regenerated now (John 3:3). “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation (kainh. kti,si, a product of the Eschaton) . . .” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Having believed the gospel, he is sealed with the Spirit of the Eschaton, the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance in the age to come (Ephesians 1:13).

**The Spirit brings the gifts of the Eschaton to all those who obey the gospel.** kingdom blessings arrived in the middle of history in advance of the dynamic entrance of the kingdom of God into time at the end of history. The gifts of the Eschaton (justification, eternal life, forgiveness, and regeneration), which belong to the age of resurrection, are thrust into the experience of God’s people in a first fruits way.

So wonderful was this fact that Paul burst into praise saying, “Praise be to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with all spiritual blessings (evn pa,sh | euvlogi,a | pneumatikh).” He went on

to pray “. . . that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened . . . in order that you may know the hope to which you were called . . .” (Ephesians 1:18ff).

**The Spirit of the Eschaton is creating a new society**, not by genetic engineering, or legal regulations, or economic redistribution, but by creating a new species among the human race—a people transformed by the Spirit of God as they put their trust in the Savior. The sons of the kingdom share together in the first fruits of the age to come. This common experience has created a fellowship of men called the church. The church is a New Race, a New Israel, a New Temple, and Royal Priesthood. Wherever God's people gather to worship Christ, the Spirit of God inhabits their praises (Ephesians 2:15-21).

When men believe, they are baptized into (placed into) the body of Christ to co-share in the blessings of God's eschatological people (1 Corinthians 12:13). This “*baptism*” is not an existential experience, but a legal placement into the eschatological family. “Baptism of the Spirit” simply means that an individual has a legal right to gather and worship with the people of the Eschaton.

The spiritual man, then, is one who has been given new life by the Spirit of God.

**The Spirit of God seeks to help individuals belonging to the Eschaton to establish a new gestalt** (form or shape). In juxtaposition to the new gestalt is the old gestalt, the unregenerate form of natural man, the flesh (Ephesians 4:17-24). Hate, bitterness, conflict, and anger were the fruits of the old gestalt. The great task of the Spirit is to take a person who is used to operating under the old gestalt, regenerate him, and then to teach him to walk by the new gestalt; i.e. new principles and new values belonging to the kingdom of God:

*Galatians 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts (the old gestalt). If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit (the new gestalt).*

The word “*live*” (zw/men) is a present, active verb implying that believers have the gift of eternal life now, a property of the Eschaton.

The verb “*walk*” is a present subjunctive verb holding out the possibility of believers living life now in this present evil age by the new gestalt. Since the people of God are created by the Spirit of God and are being prepared for the Eschaton, His people can learn to walk by the new principles of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5:22). Love and joy, which characterize the age to come, can be employed now in advance of the Eschaton by “keeping in step with the Spirit.”

*Walking in the spirit* is consistent with obeying God's law (Romans 8:4). Law does not save man nor does it regenerate society, but the spiritual man will obey OT Law (morals) and NT case law – in so doing he is blessing in society. Love is a fulfillment of law; i.e. as one obeys the law, he loves his neighbor. There are not two Bibles, an OT and a NT. There is one Bible and the believer lives according to it.

The spiritual man is one who employs this new gestalt as the fundamental controlling feature of his new life in Christ.

**The Spirit of the Eschaton empowers believers** to live consistently within this new gestalt when they intentionally, continually seek to be employed by Him.

*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).*



The verb “*filled*” (plhrou/sq) means to be “employed, governed, or controlled” by the Spirit; i.e. ruled by the new gestalt. The verb is a present, passive, imperative. It is a command. The use of the present passive indicates that the individual believer must be ‘constantly being constant’ about being governed by the Spirit. Being “*filled with Spirit*” stands in juxtaposition to being drunk with wine. As one takes many sips of wine to become drunk, one must frequently sip the Spirit to be filled with the Spirit. Since Jesus is the Ruler of the age to come, and since one must acknowledge His Lordship to enter His kingdom, it behooves each member of the Eschaton to obey his directive *to be constantly being constant* about being employed by His Spirit.

The spiritual man, therefore, *is a man that is governed by the Spirit of God*. To be governed by the Spirit of God is to obey God’s law-word (John 14:15; Romans 8:4; 1 John 5:1-3).

Application: Instead of struggling in our own weak way to please God (the old gestalt), we should *be constantly being constant* about being connected to real power—the resources of the Spirit -- Creator of heaven and earth -- Creator of the New Heaven and New Earth, Creator of the body of the Lord Jesus, and Creator of God’s new society. There is just no excuse for constantly being defeated when one can be constantly being filled with the Spirit of the Eschaton.

## 55. THE BLESSING OF RECONCILIATION

***Romans 5:11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation (atonement).***

### DEFINITION

Reconciliation is a gift of God. It is not earned by men nor is it a reward for seeking the Lord.

Who hasn’t felt the fear of holiness and sought flight from the God from whom He has virgorously offended? Men are on the run from the Eternal Spirit avoiding thoughts and discussions about Him. But, it is worse than this. Man in his natural state is considered a traitor by God, an enemy combatant, a consenting rebel member of the anti-God forces within humanity. **The good news of the gospel is that God is offering terms of peace to His enemies.**

*Reconciliation*, then, has a reference ***to a change in relationship from hostility to love***, acceptance and friendship (Criswell, 1991).

Reconciliation is a relational term describing God’s action in removing the hostility between Himself (the offended Creator) and the sinner (the offending creature).

Adam declared war on God’s law-order and rebelled against it. He renounced his duties, failed to defend Eve, and followed the hissing Serpent at the trunk of the Poisonous Tree. God was righteously angry at the rebellion and viewed man His enemy. While the OT announces the destruction of God’s enemies, God in His amazing grace, offers terms of peace through Calvary to all who unconditionally surrender to His Son as the risen Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:6-10; 10:9, 10).

**MAN AN ENEMY OF GOD**

**First**, we must correct a modern day myth regarding the universal love of God for all mankind. In listening to modern religionists, you get the impression that God loves everybody regardless of their character and is going to take all men to heaven . . . or at least the “good” or 50% of humanity. The person who believes that all men are lovable and that God is so loving He would never send anyone to hell will not appreciate the “*doctrine of reconciliation*.”

God's love is effectual but **not** universal and effective. He seeks those He loves and saves the objects of His love . . . but He does **not** save everybody. God is **not** obliged to love anyone, but in His grace He loves some – but why is locked up in his eternal counsels (Romans 9:13-20). To teach that God loves everyone (even those who end up in hell) is to rob the child of God of the comfort of His redeeming love and to “strengthen the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life” (Ezekiel 13:22).

*2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; **but is longsuffering to us-ward**, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

If God does **not** love everybody, why does the Bible use global language such as the Lord is “not willing that **any** should perish” (2 Peter 3:9) or “**whosoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13).

The “*whosoever*” is best understood as a limited appeal: “*all those who*” do call. Peter narrows God's patience to “*usward*” or “*to us*,” the elect. We must **not** disregard context or fail to recognize the character of language. Boneheaded literalism is **not** intended. We often use universal language. When the professor asks, “*Has everyone finished their assignment?*” he only means his class **not** the whole university. When a father says, “*Everybody go to bed*,” he refers only to his own family not the whole neighborhood. *While the death of Christ is sufficient for all, it is only efficient for His elect.*

*Romans 5:10 For if, when we were enemies (echthroi), we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

In Romans 5:10, the Spirit describes natural man as God's enemy (*echthroi*). An enemy is the opposite of “beloved.” An enemy is **not** someone who is less than a friend, but someone who is an adversary or opponent. The term “*enemy*” does **not** refer to man's hostility to God, but God's hostility to man! So much that man is said to be *an object of wrath* (5:9). Thus, man's terrifying problem is **not** ignorance or lack of education or deficient technology (Gnosticism & Modern U.S. education), but that He is a sinner in the hands of an angry God! Men are like mice being held by the tail who have been caught eating the cheese belonging to a butcher. Selah!

The term (*echthros*) is used 32 times in the NT for personal *enemies* (Galatians 4:16), but in the OT and LXX, it is used for the adversaries of Israel (Luke 1:71), of Jerusalem (Luke 19:43); and, in the NT to witnesses (Revelation 11:5) and of believers within their own families (Matthew 10:36). *Echthros* refers, also, to hostility to God and Christ (Luke 19:27; Philippians 3:18; Acts 13:10, and cf. the quoting of Psalm 110:1 in Mark 12:36; Acts 2:34-35; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 1:13; Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:25 considers all the forces that are hostile to God, including death).

*Matthew 13:25, 28 But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away . . . And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' And the slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?'...39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.*

*Matthew 22:44 The Lord said to my LORD, "Sit at My right hand, Until I put Thine enemies beneath Thy feet."*

*Luke 19:27 (Jesus speaking) But these enemies of Mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence . . .*

*Hebrews 1:13 But to which of the angels has He ever said, "Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies A footstool for Thy feet "?*

*Hebrews 10:13 . . . waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet.*

Man lives with a constant hostility toward God, resisting His law while attempting to overthrow it and to replace it with the statutes of man. Man is antagonistic to Biblical religion seeking to destroy His revelation to man, injure His reputation, and create a revolt against the rule of Almighty God. At war with God, man seeks to kill his Opponent and to usurp His throne.

### **THE GREAT QUESTION**

**Q:** While man is announced as an enemy and object of wrath is there love equal to it?

Fortunately, the answer is “Yes!” The Bible addresses “*a so great of salvation*,” an incredible love wherein God gave His Son as consideration in an offer of peace to rebellious man (Hebrews 2:3).

*No more love to God is there in an unrenewed heart than there is life within a piece of granite. No more love to God is there within the soul that is unsaved than there is fire within the depths of the ocean's waves. And here is the wonder, that when we had no love for God, he should have loved us! (Spurgeon)*

### **LINGUISTIC INFORMATION**

*Apokatalasso* as a verb, means to reconcile completely, to reconcile back again, bring back a former state of harmony (Ephesians. 2:16). It is Christ reconciling enemy Jews and Gentiles to God breaking hostility and creating a new humanity reconciled to God.

*Katallage* (kat-al-lag-ay') is translated *reconciliation*, *atonement*, or *the act of reconciling*. It means *to exchange*. **First**, the term was used in the business of money changing to explain the transfer of equivalent values. **Second** the term refers to the adjustment of a relationship and restoration to favor. In the NT, reconciliation refers to the restoration of sinners to an offended God (2 Corinthians 5:18b).

*Katallasso* (kat-al-las'-so) is translated *reconcile* six times. It means “to change or to exchange.” Hence, reconciliation is the change of status between an inferior to the favor of a superior (2 Corinthians 5:18a).

### **THE NECESSITY OF RECONCILIATION**

***“In the beginning God, created the heavens and the earth.”***

The Creator made man to be a steward over His creation, to take dominion, and to rule this world to the glory of God—not to rule one another, but to cooperate in making the earth a suitable habitat for man. The Father laid down his laws to govern man's conduct. But, the first man rebelled and all creation fell with him. Man is no longer right with God or with his fellow man.

- Man is in conflict with God.
- Man has conflicts within himself.
- Man has conflicts with other human beings.
- Man has conflicts with his environment.

... and, God is angry at rebellious man!

Man broke the peace and initiated an unprovoked war of aggression against God and His law. *“All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). A

all the misery of men is due to the representative rebellion of Adam known as *“the fall.”* Because man is at war with the laws over nature and the laws of nature's God, misery is perpetuated: abortion and divorce, rape and Sodomy, theft and fraud, anger and hostility, war and conflict are the results of man living in rebellion to God and His Law-word. Like apple that falls from the tree shrivels and dies, so man shrivels and dies because he has departed from his dependence on his Creator.

God hates sin (Psalm 5:5; 11:5; Hosea 9:15). Like the odors of decaying matter are repulsive to our sense of smell, so our sin is repulsive to God (Matthew 12:36-37). He hates sin and has indignation everyday (Psalm 7:11). Just as a rebellious child angers a parent, the sinner's rebellion against house rules angers the Father of all Creation (Colossians 1:20; John 1:29; Hebrews 9:26). The Father is not offended because He's hyper-sensitive, but because man multiplies pain and suffering among humanity. Sin is not in the environment. It is in man.

How, then, can a sinner ever hope to appease and offend God? He can't!!

*Reconciliation* is the Creator's gracious endeavor to reach out to man (His elect) and restore a relationship to Spirit-drawn sinners and deliver them from isolation and separation from Him. Reconciliation is **not** what man does to appease an offended God **but** what God does to satisfy His own sense of justice – a justifying work based on the “faithfulness of Jesus” (Romans 3:26). Reconciliation is received, **not** earned!!

*<sup>NASB</sup> Romans 5:11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom **we have now received the reconciliation.***

In the marvelous documentary titled *“Peace Child,”* Don Richardson tells the story of how two Sawi tribes of Indonesia gained peace. Hidden in this tribal culture was a means of securing peace between two factions. The stronger tribe would offer peace on the agreement (contract) that the smaller tribe would take the chief's son and rear him in their village—providing for and protecting the chief's son. As long as the child lived, peace was secured, but if something happened to the child, peace was broken and the dark clouds of war blanketed the island. In a formal ceremony, each warrior touched the “peace child” in order

to inaugurate the peace treaty; that is, the chief gave his son to his enemies to raise promising permanent peace. And, this is what the Father did to hostiles on earth. He gave His Son to secure peace.

John MacArthur explains that...

***Reconciliation** is not something man does but what he receives; it is not what he accomplishes but what he embraces. Reconciliation does not happen when man decides to stop rejecting God but when God decides to stop rejecting man. It is a divine provision by which God's holy displeasure against alienated sinners is appeased, His hostility against them removed, and a harmonious relationship between Him and them established. Reconciliation occurs because God was graciously willing to design a way to have all the sins of those who are His removed from them "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12 - Spurgeon's note), "cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19), and "cast all (their) sins behind (His) back" (Isaiah 38:17), (MacArthur, 2003).*

## **PROPTIATION: THE BASIS OF RECONCILIATION**

God did **not** ignore sin, **nor** did He overlook punishment for sin. He sent Jesus to be the propitiation for sin and to satisfy the claims of God's holiness (Romans 3:24ff).

In paganism, the worshipper sought to propitiate His god with gifts and sacrifices. Ancient man resorted to the extreme practices of severing fingers and testicles from the body in order to appease his god. Modern man believes God is so loving He would never punish anyone. Pagans try to appease God by leaving scraps from meals on a plate outside their door. But, the Scripture tells us He will destroy all His enemies (Psalm 21:9ff; Psalm 110:1-2). And, there is nothing man can do about it. He is condemned already! Rebels will be smashed by the hammer of justice, but God in his mercy provided a way for repentant sinners to find peace with Him. Reconciliation is possible. But, reconciliation **cannot** occur by man's efforts, works, or gifts. *The gospel reveals, it is God who propitiates Himself.* God satisfied his own claims of holiness through the sacrifice of His perfect Lamb.

*Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

The word "propitiation" (i'lasth,rion, *hilistarion*) refers to the *mercy seat* on the Ark of the Covenant, the place where blood was sprinkled in the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. With blood on the altar, Israel's God was able to remain among His people. But, this only foreshadowed the real altar.

**Jesus is God's mercy seat**, the basis of propitiation that fulfills God's justice and which takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Jesus reconciled us to God through his body on the cross. Jesus needed a body, so that he would have something to offer as a sacrifice. His body was the sacrifice placed on the mercy seat; that is, Christ is the not only the mercy seat, He is the sacrifice. We cannot help but see a picture of Jesus as the mercy seat in John 20:12 where two angels were stationed at the place where Jesus' body lay in the grave, one at the head and the other at the foot. His shed blood satisfies the demands of holiness and is the foundation of reconciliation (Isaiah 53; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Matthew 27:45-46; Romans 5:9-11).

Unger explains:

***Man is reconciled to God, but God is not said to be reconciled to man.** By this change lost humanity is rendered savable. As a result of the changed position of the world through the death of Christ the divine attitude toward the human family can no longer be the same. God is enabled to deal with lost souls in the light of what Christ has accomplished. **Although this seems to be a change in God, it is not a reconciliation; it is rather a "propitiation."** **God places full efficacy in the finished work of Christ and accepts it.** Through His acceptance of it He remains righteous and the justifier of any sinner who believes in Jesus as his reconciliation. When an individual sees and trusts in the value of Christ's atoning death, he becomes reconciled to God, hostility is removed, friendship and fellowship eventuate (M. F. Unger, 1988).*

In love wider and deeper than the oceans, God sent Jesus Christ as a perfect Substitute in His life and death, reconciling the objects of His love to Himself. The gospel announces this reconciliation as the full and free pardon of a condemned humanity. The preaching of the law prepares sinners for justification by showing them their need for the Savior. In faith a sinner is assured of God's pardon due to the propitiating work of Christ. And it is this faith that is imputed for righteousness, judicially declared righteous—legal and not inherent. Being righteous by faith, the elect have peace with God and a foundation for assurance of eternal life. And, if God loved us while we were enemies “how much more,” accepting the terms of the contract, shall we be saved by His life?

## THE LOCUS OF RECONCILIATION

***Colossians 1:19-21 "For it was the Father's good pleasure, for all the fulness to dwell in him, and through him"—that's through Jesus—"to reconcile all things to himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross." And then he goes on to say, "He has now reconciled you in his fleshly body through death."***

**Reconciliation** means there has been a change in attitude, not in man first, but in God toward man because of what Christ has accomplished at Calvary. Reconciliation was accomplished while men were still enemies of God (Romans 5:6-8). The death of Christ, in one sense, made God whole by fulfilling the covenant contract; not only did Christ obey the law perfectly, He paid for the lawless acts of sinners. Reconciliation is something entirely objective. Reconciliation does **not** happen because of a change within man, but because of the great historical events outside of man at Calvary. *Reconciliation is a transaction by God in a testament to His own character on our behalf through Christ and that reconciliation took place at the cross.*

John Denny writes,

*That we on our part are hostile to God before the reconciliation, and that we afterwards lay aside our enmity, is no doubt true; but here it is entirely irrelevant. The Apostle's thought is simply this: "If, when we lay under the Divine condemnation, the work of our reconciliation to God was achieved by Him through the death of His Son, much more shall the love which wrought so incredibly for us in our extremity carry out our salvation to the end." (Nicoli, Pre 1923)*

Denny goes on to emphasize that the man who subjectively lays aside his hostilities toward God has **nothing** to do with God's love. Reconciliation is **not** mutual. Reconciliation does **not** prove anything about the Christian, but it does provide proof and evidence of the exceeding, unsurpassing great love God has for us. While God offers friendship to sinners who accept His reconciliation, we must remember His friendship is an act of grace, **not** of merit. While Jesus called his disciples "*friends*," they called Him the **Lord Jesus Christ**. The offer of friendship does **not** mean equality! It reveals the King's humility and desire to have peace with His subjects. His offer accepted, He will always be His Majesty in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name to a grateful people.

### **THE HOW OF RECONCILIATION**

As already discussed, God is the One doing the reconciling. To enjoy terms of peace, reconciliation must be received by men. It cannot be earned. God is **not** appeased by "fig leaves" or "vegetables" or man's peace offerings. He is **only** appeased by the offering of Christ and man's acceptance of His reconciliation (Romans 5:11).

*<sup>NAS</sup> Romans 5:11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom **we have now received the reconciliation**.*

### **THE RESULTS OF RECONCILIATION**

- Reconciliation means terms of peace are tendered by the Stronger, the war ended, hostilities ceased, harmony restored and friendship offered.
- Those accepting the contract offer can obtain peace with God (Romans 5:1-10). In Christ, the sinner finds his basis of acceptance before the Father. Jesus is not only our representative by which God's law is honored, He is God's Representative to the human race as the Mediator between God and man. No longer does the sinner have to go to a religious "sweat shop" to work for approval (Colossians 1:20ff; Romans 5:1-10).
- Reconciliation can result in peace with others who are reconciled to God—especially the alienation between Jews and Gentiles. Believing Jews and believing Gentiles are graciously received into one family due to Israel's Messiah (Ephesians 2:11f).
- Reconciliation makes it possible to enjoy the "peace with God" and to have the "peace of God." Man must believe to have peace with God (justification), and he must obey to possess the peace of God (sanctification) (Philippians 4:7; Colossians 3:15f).
- Personal reconciliation is a "sneak preview" of consummate reconciliation of God's creation to Himself that will take place in the Eschaton (Colossians 1:20; Acts 3:21; Ephesians 1:10).
- Through Christ, the reconciled is brought near to God (Ephesians 2:10-13).
- Reconciliation means that sin is no longer imputed to the believer's account. Rather, God views the man as righteous by virtue of Christ and His accomplishments (2 Corinthians 5:18).

**Jesus' faithfulness in life and death** satisfies the claims of holiness and provides man with a restored relationship to God. **Jesus' life**, however, guarantees that believing man will be reconciled to all that sin has stolen from him (Romans 3:22, 26; 5:10, 11).

Notice the phrase "*much more*" in Romans 5:10. Notice the two verbs, "*having been reconciled*" (an aorist participle) and "*shall be saved*" (a future passive indicative). Notice the instrumentality of future salvation, "*by the life of Him.*" Before us is a Greek dialectic, a non-emotional argument designed to persuade an opponent to adopt the debater's position. Using a *fortiori* argument,<sup>43</sup> "*an argument from a yet stronger position,*" Paul seeks to persuade us that if God gave His Son to reconcile us through His death. Therefore, *how much more* shall he save us now and in the future by His enduring life? If He has done the greater thing of saving us through the death of Christ, *how much more* can we trust Him to do the lesser thing—an argument used four times in Romans (5:9, 10, 15; 11:12, 24).

If God purchased our reconciliation at such a great price through the death of His Son, will he ever let us go? If we are saved by His death, how much more will we be preserved by the present, risen, exalted life of the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God? If God redeemed us by Christ, does He not have power to keep us redeemed? If he did this when we were enemies, how much will he save us now that we are friends? If He did this while we were children of the Devil, how much more will He deliver us now that we are sons of God? If the dying Savior saved us, how much more will the living Christ save us? If we are delivered from the penalties of sins, surely we will be delivered from the power of death's grip as we cross Jordan's River. Thus, we are not only delivered from sins, but from fear, uncertainty, and doubt! If He rescues us from the burning flames, will He not refresh us with a cold glass of water?

To be "*saved*" in Romans 5:10 refers to the possibility of being saved from the power of sin in this life and the power of death in transition from Earth to Heaven: "*Because I live, you shall live also,*" (John 14:19). He has life in Himself, and His life is our guarantee that death is not lord, that death must release its grip on us, that we will live for all eternity because we are connected to the very Source of Life, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

To be saved by "*His life*" refers the power of His life at work in our souls now. His life on earth did not save us from the penalty of sin. His death saves us from the penalty of sin. But, His life at the right hand of the Father *makes possible the defeat of the dominion of sin in our lives* during this pilgrim journey. Paul could say that he was always being delivered over to death that the life of Jesus may be manifest in his body (2 Corinthians 4:11). We are reconciled to God by the death of the Savior. This is initial salvation, our justification and reconciliation to the Creator. But, His life and exaltation to the right hand of God secures sanctification now and ultimate salvation at the Parousia. He not only saved us in the past, He continues to save us now, and He will save us forever (Hebrews 7:25). This is confidence! This is assurance! This is eternal security for His elect!

### **AN APPLICATION OF RECONCILIATION**

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<sup>43</sup> An *a fortiori* argument relies upon existing confidence in a proposition to argue in favor of a second proposition that is held to be implicit in the first. The second proposition may be treated as "weaker," and therefore the debating proponent adduces a "stronger" proposition to support it.



**First**, the reconciled is qualified to conduct the ministry of reconciliation (1 Corinthians 5:18); that is, the service of helping men get right with God and one another. God's ministers are "*ambassadors*" and "*priests*" and "*kings*" and "*peacemakers*" on earth that conduct the ministry of reconciliation:" "*Be reconciled to God.*" The King is offering terms of peace. Surrender and accept His authority (2 Corinthians 5:20).

**Second**, the reconciled is called to manage his relationships with integrity. The one claiming to have peace with God must do all he can to be reconciled to those who have a complaint against him (Matthew 5:24; 1 Corinthians 7:11).

**Third**, reconciliation involves assisting others who have tensions in their human relationships (Ephesians 4:21ff; Colossians 3:1ff).

God calls man to trust Him, and God in turn, promises to honor that trust. Likewise, all human relationships demand trust and integrity to make relationships work. Just as getting right with God calls for humility, reconciliation among people calls for humility, acceptance of responsibility, and confession of wrong doing. Human relationships call for the believer to invest in integrity; and when wrong, to confess and make restitution where necessary. The whole idea of justice in the Law involves making things right. When we injure others by our wrong doing, we have to make to make them whole.

## 56. THE BLESSING OF ADOPTION

***Romans 8:15 "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.***

Christians receive the *Spirit of adoption* when they trust Christ as a benefit of the gospel. The word *adoption* does not mean "to adopt" in the same way a childless couple may adopt a baby into their family.

Biblical adoption (ui'oqesi,aj, *huiiothesia*) means "***granting full rights as a son;***" that is, the child of God is given full rights and privileges as a Son even though he is a sinner and even though he still lives in a mortal body. The word *adoption* implies two basic privileges: (A) The granting of full rights as sons of God; and, (B) the guarantee of a new *soma* or resurrected body (Romans 8:15-23; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5):

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It was a Roman custom to adopt natural children. Until age 21, youth were treated as children and were obligated to wear a short skirt indicating their position as underprivileged citizens. But at age 21, the Roman father would take his son to the court house and register him as a Roman citizen. At the courthouse the young man would be granted full rights of citizenship including the right to vote and hold public office. The father would then present his son with a *full-length toga* representing the change in status, his installation into manhood, and his citizenship.

The Christian doctrine of adoption builds on this Roman principle. The Christian has received full status as a child of God. Presently, the Christian enjoys the status of citizenship in the kingdom of God, but he has yet to receive his toga, the redemption of his body.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF ADOPTION**

Adoption assures the believer that he is indeed a true child of God and not a second class citizen.

It assures the child of God that while he is still living in this sinful body, he still has full rights in the family. It assures the believer of a future inheritance where he will receive the adoption of his body. It emphasizes the dignity and the importance of the child's relationship to his Heavenly Father.

### **THE BASIS OF ADOPTION**

The basis of adoption is redemption, the release from the corruption of our sins, and regeneration, the fact that believers are recreated in the image of Christ.

### **THE DIVINE SIDE**

Adoption is God's act (Romans 8:13ff). He is the Father of all creation (Psalm 33) and all men are objects of his loving care (Matthew 5:45). But, men have turned away from their Creator and become unworthy. In reality, unregenerate men have the Devil as their father (John 8:40ff). But, God is a redemptive Father is creating a new race of people, a new society that will make up the kingdom of God (Ephesians 2, 3).

God knows, loves, and cares for His children (1 John 3:1-2). Though the world does not recognize them, they exist and are destined to share in the physical transformation of the body when the Lord returns.

### **THE HUMAN SIDE**

Not everyone is a child of God. Jews are not the children of God. Pagans are not children of God. And, church members are not necessarily His children. Only those born of God are His true children (John 1:12-13). The regenerated now bear the family likeness (Romans 8:29; Colossians 3:10).

As elect children, they are objects of love. *A Christian does not have to be important for God to love him; He is important because God loves him* (1 John 4:7ff). Christians carry the family name (Ephesians 3:14; Revelation 2:17). They bear the family image (John 1:12; 3:6; 2 Peter 1:4). And, they are destined to be like Christ physically in the resurrection (1 John 3:1-2).

### **RELATIONSHIP OF ADOPTION TO OTHER DOCTRINES**

*Justification* is the act of a judge declaring a man righteous. *Adoption* is acceptance of His children into His family.

*Redemption* is the act of a merciful judge setting a prisoner free from condemnation; *Adoption* is the compassionate act of merciful father setting his children free from fear of rejection.

*Regeneration* results in a change of nature, a spiritual reality; *Adoption* results in a change of nature, a taking on of the family image in Christ.

*Sanctification* is a process of changing character, a growth experience; *Adoption* is an immediate change in standing, the basis of growth.

*Glorification* is about receiving a new body and the public honor of being a child of God; *Adoption* is about receiving a new status and the private assurance of knowing we will receive glorified bodies in the Eschaton.

*Under law*, a child was treated no different than a slave; *under grace*, the child is treated as an adult member of the family.

### **THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF ADOPTION**

- Adoption increases our debt to live for God by the Spirit (Romans 8:12).
- Adoption increases our faith to act like family members (Ephesians 5:1).
- Adoption decreases our fears about rejection (Romans 8:15).
- Adoption increases our assurance that we are children of God (Romans 8:14).
- Adoption increases our hope of future glory (Romans 8:17ff).

## **57. THE BLESSING OF FREEDOM**

Part of the gospel is the good news that the believer is not under law, but under grace (Romans 6:14). But, what does this mean? Does it mean the law is irrelevant and has no application for today? In Paul's terms, "God forbid!" *Grace is **not** opposed to law.*

***The opposite of law is not grace, but lawlessness. The opposite of grace is not law, but licentiousness.*** Believers are delivered from the law as the means of justification, but they are not released from law as a description of righteousness or the goal of sanctification (Romans 8:4). Accepting responsibility lightens the load and leads to freedom; and, irresponsibility tightens the chains that tend toward slavery

### **THE THEOLOGY OF DIFFICULTY**

The believer's relationship to God's law is one of the stickiest theological issues at large in the church today. *The problem is one of continuity vs. discontinuity.* What is continuous and what is discontinuous? What is the criteria we use to decide which Old Testament laws we will keep and which one we will abandon?

**The Messianic community** reminds us that the OT is relevant for today's Christian. But, the Messianic community tends to drag OT rituals into NT church practices. Feasts and festivals are kept regularly. Restrictive food laws are encouraged for holiness. And Jewish traditions are practiced even exalting OT authority over NT authority. Certainly, *the attempt to Judaize the church is a deviation from the gospel* that results in a **curse** (Galatians 1:4-8).

On the other hand, **dispensationalism** has created the opposite problem. They advance *powerful discontinuity* between Testaments. So much so that among hyper-dispensationalists, only the letters of Paul are considered authoritative for the church. A strong barrier between the church and Israel has been erected in these circles so that many are reluctant to use OT authority to advance God's law-order as the basis of civil law or Christian-sanctification. Some even consider the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount irrelevant for the church. In some dispensational "grace" circles telling a believer

he has to obey an OT command is as offensive asking the imperial wizard of the Klu Klux Klan to speak at NAACP.

*I learn in the law that God abhorred stealing, but it is not because I am under the law that I do not steal. All the Word of God is mine, and written for my instruction; yet for all that I am not under law, but a Christian who has died with Christ on the Cross, and am not in the flesh, to which the law applied. I have died to the law by the body of Christ (Romans 7:4). (John Darby, cited by Miles Stanford in the paper entitled, Arminius, To Calvin, To Paul -- Man, Law, or Christ-Centered?)*

And, then there is the **utilitarian** type of Christianity that picks and chooses from the OT what is convenient, but leaves behind what he deems cumbersome. Preachers will create sermons on tithing to fill the church coffers but would not consider preaching a sermon that demanded the death penalty for homosexuals or their excommunication from the church (Leviticus 20:30). This “*pick and choose*” policy fails to define the principle upon which the NT permits continuity or disparages discontinuity.

Most Christians believe the law has no place in the justification of the believer. But, Reformed Christians teach that once one becomes a Christian, the law is useful for sanctification. No subject is more confusing to the average Christian than his relationship to the Law of God. At least four positions have been advanced:

- Aquinas defined the gospel as the introduction of “a new law” and Christ as a new Moses.
- Luther disagreed with the proposition that the gospel was a “new law.” He tended to separate law from the gospel in the course of life. This failure of the reformation to resolve grace / law issues made passage on the road of salvation a bumpy one for succeeding generations.
- Antinomianism: God has set the believer free from all law, and the believer no longer has any responsibility to “The Law of God.”
- Legalism: salvation is maintained by keeping the law of God.
- Third use of the Law: The believer is made holy (sanctified) by keeping the law.
- Redemption from law: The believer is released from any obligation to the Law in order that he might be accountable to Christ.

**Calvin described three types of law:** the ceremonial, judicial, and moral. He saw the moral law as applicable to all men with a pedagogical purpose for sinners; and the judicial aspects of God’s Law as the guide for civil rulers for the purpose of restraining evil in society; and a didactic use as a guide for righteousness in the life of a grateful believer. But, this may be an oversimplification of his view. (John Calvin, Institutes 2.9.4).

**The judicial law**, according to Calvin, encompassed the “formulas of equity and justice” whereby the people of Israel were ruled as a nation—a system of law that is not binding because of its historical context of the past. To Calvin, the moral law was binding on men and was the standard by which civil rulers should adopt law applicable to their society.

*“To make this matter still more clear, we must go a little farther back, to the law itself, which the Lord prescribed as a perpetual rule for the Church, to be always in the hands of men, and to be observed in every succeeding age”.*

*“The promises of the Law depend on the conditions of works while the Gospel promises are free and dependent solely on God's mercy” (Institutes, 3.11.17).*

### **BIBLICAL STATEMENTS**

*Romans 6:15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.*

*Romans 7:4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*

*Romans 7:6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.*

*Romans 8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

*Galatians 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:*

*Galatians 4:5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of son .*

*Galatians 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*

*Galatians 5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*

### **DEFINITIONS**

**“The Law” refers to the Torah**, the first five books of Moses. God gave the Law to Moses, and he wrote it down on tablets of stone (Exodus 24:3-4).

However, when Paul mentions “law” in Galatians, he seems to refer to Judaism and its case law and not Torah. The Law in Galatians seems to include the Jewish traditions developed in the Intertestament Period which were considered part of the Law by the scribes, elders, and Pharisees. And, this is part of the problem. Rabbinical teachings were considered equal with and often the superior authority to the written Law of Moses.

**The term “nomos”** is an anarthrous noun in Romans 6:14. It does not refer to “*the Law*” (Torah) but to a principle of a law. It does not mean we are free from all law for we are always under the law of God. The “Law” from which we are set free refers to *any system of rewards and punishments* whereby man can obtain a good standing before God by his performance. Believing man is **not** under law as a means to salvation; **nor** can an unregenerate man look to the Law as the mediator for his justification and still please God.

**Moral Law:** The Ten Commandments are direct reflections of God's character and are binding on all men for all time. Furthermore, there is case law in the OT which can and should be used to clarify man's duty to man. Calvin would agree, dispensationalists do not! The failure to see the NT as case law has been the source of more than a few evils. We do **not** have two Bibles: an Old Testament and a New Testament. *We have one God, one law, one Mediator between man and God, one Bible, and one way of salvation.*

**Ceremonial Law:** The sacrificial laws, dietary statutes, and festival obligations found in the Old Testament appear to be temporal and pedagogical; that is, they had a temporary purpose of preparing a nation to receive their Messianic Lawgiver. These laws hemmed Israel in and kept them from mingling among the nations until the Christ was born.

Now that Christ appeared in history the ceremonial aspects of the law and their Levitical purpose has ceased, and they are not binding on men today. When Paul says believers are free from law, he is referring to Jewish customs such as the observance of "days and seasons and months and years" (Galatians 4:10) and restrictions "in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days" (Colossians 2:15). It would be overreaching to say that men are free from moral law as expressed both in the Old and New Testament.

### **PROPOSITIONS**

The source of Law is the infinite, personal God of the Bible; that is, the Law is the product of His sovereignty and grace to the people He loves (Exodus 20:1). The law is a direct reflection of God's character.

For this reason, the tablets were called "*the testimony*"—because they testified to the character of God (Exodus 25:21). Because the law represents the character of God who is eternal, His law is absolute (Psalm 119:144). God gave the law because He was their **Sovereign** ("*I am the LORD*") and because He was Israel's **Savior** ("*I brought you out of Egypt*"). As Sovereign, he is the **only** legitimate Source of law (Isaiah 33:22; James 4:22). Looking to any other law source upon which to build a juridical society, including the State, is idolatry.

*The Law is an objective reflection of God's character* (Psalm 119:137). Because God is eternal and perfect, His Law is absolute and binding on all men for all of time (Psalm 119:142). This includes presidents, legislators, and Supreme Court justices. God's law is good for the Christian because it is good for all men and all of man's institutions.

There are two types of laws in the Torah -- **moral law** which is a direct reflection of God's character and **ceremonial law** which is an indirect reflection of God's character. The dissimilarity between the two is like the difference between the Sun and the Moon. As the Moon reflects the rays of the Sun, ceremonial law indirectly reflect the character of God. Moral law is absolute and binding on all men; and ceremonial law had a temporal, tutorial purpose in history and is not obligatory on all mankind.

The Ten Commandments are the *objective standard and legal basis of law* while the life of Jesus Christ is the *subjective standard and spiritual example of God's law*. The Torah was a written, objective standard of righteousness given to the nation until the Perfect, Subjective Standard of Righteousness was manifest to the nation (Galatians 4:1-6).

*Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

In the NT, Pauline theology rejected the law (*Torah as a mediator and source of salvation*). The believing man does **not** stand under the Law as a system of salvation. There is no law that can save the soul of sinful man . . . and there is no law that can regenerate society. Selah. The remedy to sin is in Christ, not law. Men are saved by faith in the doing and dying of the Lord Jesus (Romans 10:4; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Galatians 3:1-14; 5:1-4). Law, properly applied, however, can purge out evil in society. Hanging murderers cleanses society.

When Paul commanded the Galatians to stand firm and not be entangled again with the yoke of slavery, he was not referring to the moral law (the Ten Commandments), **but** *to the ceremonial aspects of the law especially as they were encumbered with Rabbinical applications* (Galatians 1:13-14). Paul directly addresses “his way in Judaism” and it Judaism which the Galatians were called to reject. The Galatians were called and to stand firm and *claim their freedom from Judaism and Rabbinical traditions* (Galatians 5:1). The Christian’s new gestalt enables him to properly apply the Ten Commandments to daily life without the encumbrances of Judaism (Romans 8:4; 13:8).

**Continuity v. discontinuity of law** is a critical issue. It is undesirable, if not impossible, to establish total discontinuity with the Law. David could say, “O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies” (Psalm 119:97-98). To believe that a love of His law is no longer applicable to the Christian is to taste the Devil’s porridge. Paul used the OT Law to establish NT practices. NT commands are case law and implementing regulations related to OT Law. He applied the law of feeding the ox to providing for ministers (1 Corinthians 9:7-9). Meditation on the Law has the same result in that it makes us wise. Furthermore, we are ordered to keep the commandments of God (1 Corinthians 7:19) and to claim OT promises (2 Corinthians 7:1-3).

*What is it about the law of God that can provoke such affection? In the first place, the law is not an abstract set of rules and regulations. The law reflects the will of the Lawgiver, and in that regard it is intensely personal. (Sproul, The Goodness of the Law).*

The Law is *good* and *holy* because it is an accurate reflection of the character of God (Romans 7:12). James calls it the “*perfect law of liberty*” (James 1:25). Obeying God’s law frees men from fear and bondage; from being ruled and controlled by religion and the statutes of men. A proper application of law creates a society where men can live without fear of losing their life, liberty, or property. The Law is good for men. The neighborhood is a safe place to live when the neighbors are committed to the Ten Commandments as their rule of life. There was not a single law given by God that was/is not beneficial to man. It is difficult, even impossible, to presume any law God gave to Moses was harmful to men. It is the commandments of men, man-made laws, alien laws, and Jewish fables that are harmful to society (Ezekiel 20:24-25; Matthew 15:9; Titus 1:14).

The problem with God’s Law is not the source or the substance of the Law, but the unregenerate heart of man and the power of sin dominating the soul of mankind. No law is capable of changing the hearts of men including but not limited to the trillions of laws created by Congress and state legislatures. And, it is legislators committed to humanism that do “mischief” through statutes (Psalm 94:20).

*Certain aspects of Torah were cultic in nature; that is, they were temporary statutes designed to hem Israel in and to tutor Israel in holiness. Israel's cultic laws (e.g. dietary and Sabbatical regulations) kept Israel from assimilating into the nations until their Messiah appeared. Dietary laws and much of the Levitical system are of this sort. They prevented socialization with Gentiles; thus, slowing down integration of paganism into the nation. Furthermore, this binding was to prevent Israel from adopting alien laws germane to a nation's deities (Deuteronomy 12:30; 18:9; Isaiah 10:1-3; Micah 3:1-3; 6:16). The great threat to the nation was not the cultic laws of Israel, but the liberal, humanistic, tyrannical statutes found in Levantine cultures. The laws of Baal were very controlling, binding, and often cruel, even immoral.*

If there is a problem with the Law it is that it tells a man what is wrong, but it lacks any power to make a man do what is right (Romans 7). The Law told a man what was right but it did not supply the power to obey it by casual acquaintance with the Law. While the law inspires a regenerated heart, it only condemns an unregenerate man.

The Law was given to Israel, not to the Gentiles (Exodus. 20:2). It was Israel's constitution. It is not the constitution of the church or the United States. It doesn't appear that God required any other nation than Israel to adopt or surrender to the Mosaic constitution. But, that is not to say the moral Law is not applicable to other nations. The Ten Commandments are a blessing for all men and can be applied to all men and to all of man's institutions (1 Timothy 1:9, 10).

Since there is only One Lawgiver, then all nations are responsible to look to the Lord as their Source of law (Isaiah 33:22; James 4:12).

A nation that will not acknowledge the Sovereignty of YHWH over their nation and the supremacy of His law over national policy joins the rebellion of Psalm 2. The weakness of the West is not its attempt to incorporate the Ten Commandments into the nation's laws, but syncretism of law based on principles of evolution — law designed to control men and feed Plato's philosopher-kings.

The believing Jew has been “redeemed” out from underneath the law (particularly the Jewish tradition considered equal with the law); he is “dead to the law;” that is, his baptism with Christ was a death to the old legal system (Romans 7:1-9). It is not a death to duty, or to morality, or to the moral law, or to love as it reflects the character of God and its rule for society. *It was a death to the binding, cultic laws of the nation.* There is law in Christ, but the Law takes on a mentoring, didactic role rather than a binding legal system to which the believer is externally bound to submit.

Judaism expanded law as a means of securing a man's relation to God, and Paul rejected Rabbinical case law as a means of mediation (Galatians 1).

Both believing Jew and Gentile are responsible to a higher law, the law of Christ, which is His character. Furthermore, the law of Christ is consistent with the justice and mercy expressed in the Torah; that is, Christ is the subjective standard of God's righteousness; whereas the written Law is the objective standard of righteousness.

*Romans 7:4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*



*John 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

**There is all the difference in the world between being saved by law, and being saved in order to keep God's law.** According to Calvin, the law tells men they are sinners in need of a Savior. Salvation means the believer is declared righteous (justification) by faith and now has the power to keep the law (*sanctification*) as an expression of his faithfulness to the Lord.

Consequently, the believer is obligated to model righteousness as reflected in the person of Christ, the perfect reflection of God's character (Matthew 5:48; John 14:9). The Torah was the *objective* standard of God's righteousness; Christ is the *subjective* standard of God's righteousness. What the Torah was to the Jew, Christ is to the believer. *Christ is the Living Torah*. The Christian in his zeal to follow Christ is a slave of righteousness (Romans 6:12-14). As such, he will conscientiously keep the 10 Commandments, not just because they are the highest expression of righteousness given to man, but because they are an accurate reflection of God's character which the devoted Christian is seeking to imitate (Ephesians 5:1-2).

The believer is not only delivered from Judaism, but in some sense the Law itself as a mediator to the Creator.

Furthermore, he is *delivered from the principle of legalism* (Romans 6:14). He is under grace. His standing before God is not a reward-for-obedience system and his acceptance in the family is based on faith, **not** perfect behavior. God does not call us to be the polished "elder son" (Luke 15). The child of God is **not** rewarded with acceptance when he obeys and punished with rejection when he disobeys. Obedience means enjoyment in the family and evidences relationship, while disobedience complicates the enjoyment of fellowship (1 John 1:5). Good works are *esthetic* and **not** *pragmatic*. They do not determine our standing in God's family. Faith, therefore, is the means of enjoying God's accomplishments in Christ.

When Paul warns against becoming entangled again to the "yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1) he could not possibly be talking about the Ten Commandments or the law as the basis for civil rule. "*Thou shall not steal*" is hardly a yoke of slavery.

Rather, Paul is talking about the *Jewish tradition* that surrounded the "*Law of Liberty*" which the Jews in Paul's day considered equal with or even transcending Scripture itself. To the Jew, the law was a mediator of justification. It was the "*commandments of men*" (Matthew 15:9) that enslaved people, **not** the Law of God. It was *Rabbinical traditions* that nullified the Law of God which Christ rebuked, not the keeping of God's Law (Matthew 15:1-9). It is the "*system of law*" as the mediator for salvation, **not** "*the moral Law*" that bound men in knots and chains (Romans 6:14).

Modern humanistic, secular man has a disdain for the moral law in part because of the lack of enthusiasm for the Ten Commandments by dispensational churches. Dispensationalists tend to demonize the Ten Commandments. By bifurcating God's law from sanctification completely, the community plunges into *mystical pietism* resulting in *personal subjectivism* and *private morality*. Failure to see the New Testament as case law can result in *licentiousness* and *everyman doing what is right in his own eyes*. The Reformers correctly separated law from the process of justification, but they tended to chain sanctification to law keeping. The reformers understood grace in regard to salvation, but for Christian living they fell into a form of works sanctification—a Galatian error. They knew that they couldn't keep the law in order to gain salvation, but the Law became **the rule** for living the Christian life. Little did they realize that

sanctification is also by grace—grace that defines the goal of sanctification (Christ's character which is conformity to law) as well as the means of sanctification—the Holy Spirit.

## 58. THE BLESSING OF PEACE

Jesus did not come to bring peace on earth..

***Matthew 10:34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword..***

*But, Jesus did come to bring peace to His people.*

*Mark 4:39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.*

*Mark 5:34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.*

*Luke 1:79 To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

*Luke 2:14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*

*John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

*Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

### DOUBLE PEACE

In 2 Kings 2:1-15,19-22, Elisha prayed for a double portion of the spirit of Elijah.

Because we live somewhere between sheer terror and the soft patter of rain upon our windows, some of us need to pray for a double portion of the Lord's peace.

Who can serve God in this unstable, maddening world without peace?

Shalom! Shalom!

***(1) The kingdom of God is characterized by peace.***

Where Christ is recognized as the King-Messiah, there is peace. Shalom marks his reign (Isaiah 9:6-7).

***"The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the goat . . . they will not hurt or destroy on my holy mountain" (Isaiah 11:6, 9)***

***The LORD, thou wilt ordain peace (shalom) for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us." (Isaiah 26:12)***

Because God will punish the Leviathan (hostile nations to Israel), God urges men to make peace with him. The exhortation to seek peace with God is repeated twice (Isaiah 27:1- 5):

***"Let him make peace (shalom) with me; Let him make peace (shalom) with me" (5).***

All of God's children can enjoy peace (Isaiah 54:13); But, there is no peace offer to the wicked (Isaiah 48:12; 57:20-21)).

- Peace comes to those who accept the reign of Christ and His authority.
- Peace comes when just men embrace God's Son by faith (Romans 5:1).

The pardoned have the certainty of double *shalom* (Isaiah 57:19), but there is no peace (shalom) to rebels.

*" . . . Peace (shalom), peace (shalom) to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him." –*

God offers peace to them that are near (Jews), and to them that are afar (Gentiles); to Jews in Babylon and to Jews in Jerusalem; to front row Christians and to back row Christians.

*Isaiah 57: 20-21 But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

Peace comes to those who forsake lawlessness and embrace God's law-order:

*"Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend (stumble) them" (Psalm 119:165).*

Peace comes to men who mind the things of God:

*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace (shalom shalom), whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3).*

**(2) On the night of the Last Supper (Tuesday), Jesus announced:**

***John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you:***

Note: One could make an argument here that Jesus left them with *objective* peace (Romans 5:1 - peace with God) and His *subjective* peace (John 16:33 - the peace of God) – a gift to men.

**(3) In the evening of Resurrection Sunday Jesus comforted His disciples:**

***John 20:19 "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."***

***20 And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.***

***21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.***

Our texts deals with two different occasions where the Lord had a double message of peace for his troubled disciples.

***The first occasion where the disciples needed peace*** was on Tuesday night at the Last Supper before the Lord's all night trial and passion.

Who can fully grasp the whirlwind of emotion swirling within the hearts of the disciples at the Passover Supper? Something was wrong! Tension filled the air. Satan entered the heart of Judas. Jesus stripped down to his essentials to wash the feet of the disciples. Peter rudely objected. Jesus reported treason in their midst. Winds of doubt rushed through the hearts of the disciples. Jesus identified Judas as the traitor by giving him the sacred portion of the meal (the sop). Jesus announced He was going away; and, then he told Peter that He was going to betray Him three times.

Jesus silenced the wind and the storm while in the boat on the Sea of Galilee, but the gale tossing and twisting the faith and fear of these seminary students on this Passover night hit land like an ominous category 3 hurricane.

***Double peace:*** Twice Jesus used the word "*peace*" to calm the storm stirring up doubt and fear in the heart of the eleven: "***Peace*** I leave with you, my ***peace*** I give unto you."

***The second occasion*** where the disciples received double peace was on the evening of Resurrection Sunday (John 20:21, 26).

Think of the waves of emotions that must have swamped the boat where the disciples birthed their hope on Passover Week: Jesus's arrest; Peter slicing off the right ear of the servant of the high priest; Jesus' healing touch; Peter's denial of Christ before a handmaid; The Lord's all night trial; the Sanhedrin's guilty verdict; Jesus' beatings before Herod; Pilate's condemnation and death sentence; His crucifixion on a cross; His death; His burial in the tomb; disciples hiding; and then . . .

Peter and John's shocking announcement the tomb was empty; Mary Magdalene's stunning report that she saw the risen Christ near the garden tomb; the chatter of doubt, wonder, and mystery by a small band of disciples gathered together on Sunday evening; the shutting of the doors while hiding from Roman authorities; and, then the sudden appearance of a dead man (Christ) standing in the middle of the frightened crowd.

Can you feel the unruly seas of fear, the lawless waves of doubt, doomed hope, sputtering faith, swells of unbelief, impetuous distrust, stern skepticism, and chaotic chatter colliding with sanguine hope, storybook faith, and intangible dreams of the followers of Christ?

Can you feel the calm reaching the shores of every soul in that room when the risen Christ appeared alive "in the flesh" behind shut doors saying to the stunned Galileans, "Peace be unto you"?

With those words, the Lord softly quieted the thunder of doubt and the roaring waves of fear crashing on the beach of the disciples' souls.

But, no sooner was the cold storm over that a tropical storm surfaced. When the Lord showed the paddling disciple his hands and side the mood shifted. Suddenly, the hearts of the mariners burst with wonderment!!

Paralyzed with happiness coupled with self-loathing the Lord said, "Peace be unto you."

When the bitters of life pound upon the shores our lives, we need His sweet peace.

When disappointment rushes in to fill an empty room of lost hopes, we need His peace.

When clouds of doubt darken our day, we need to bask in the light of His peace.

*"If God be our God, He will give us peace in trouble. When there is a storm without, He will make peace within. The world can create trouble in peace, but God can create peace in trouble" - Thomas Watson (Puritan).*

*" . . . Then were the disciples glad."*

When the sweets of life excite our tastes with ecstasy, we need His clarifying peace.

When the dreams of life are realized and the smiles of angels overwhelm us, we need His calming peace.

A prayer: "Double your peace, to my soul, Oh Lord!"

#### **(4) Double peace is found in Isaiah 26:3**

***"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace (shalom, shalom), whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."***

A literal translation of this portion of the song should read, "Thou will keep him in ***shalom shalom*** . . ." That is "***double peace***." The translators interpolated the phrase "*perfect peace*" to express *double peace*, "*shalom shalom*." The idea here is of *impeccable peace*. The one whose mind trusts in the Lord will experience optimal peace -- "*shalom shalom*" -- "*perfect peace*."

#### **(5) Peace is the means through which God conquers Satan; that is, men must lay hold of the God of peace to defeat sin.**

*Romans 16:20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

Satan is not conquered by anger or wrath or bulldozing determination . . . but by a heart at rest enjoying *shalom shalom*.

### **A BENEDICTION OF PEACE FOR GOD'S CHURCHES**

**Hebrews 13: 20-21** Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

This is a prayer for the complete restoration of the sheep; that is, as silver is refined in the furnace, let us be refined so we might perfectly reflect His image under heat of trials.

The title “*God of peace*” is the subject of the sentence and “*make you perfect*” (*katartisai*) is the optative verb; that is, it is a wish, **not** a command and **not** a fact. *Katartisai* means “*to mend what is broken; to make whole or complete; to sew a rip in a garment.*”

Paul’s prayer is grounded on the work of the “*God of peace*” – **not** the God of righteousness or holiness or power or mercy or grace, but the “*God of peace.*”

This “*God of peace,*” having been propitiated by the death of His Son on the cross; and, our debt having been fully discharged by the blood of Christ; and, God having forgiven us of our sins by the mediation of the Savior, reached into hell and raised the Lord Jesus from the dead.

Use of the title “*God of peace*” implies there was some kind of strife or conflict to which His work was needed. Possibly, (a) the strife and division among the Hebrews needed repair, or (b) the conflict regarding God and sinners having ended through Christ, God being at rest restored the life of His Son.

Jesus is called “*the great shepherd of the sheep.*” He was great in character; great in battle; great in love; great in holiness; great in courage; and great is His accomplishments, and great in Shepherding of God’s flock.

We believers are called “*sheep*” probably because we do not understand what the Shepherd did for us at Calvary and does for us in His present exalted life. As the good shepherd, our Lord *died* for the sheep and protected them from Divine wrath (Psalm 22); as the great shepherd He *lives* and *provides* for His sheep (Psalm 23); as the Chief Shepherd he *reigns* . . . and *rewards* the sheep eternal blessings (Psalm 24).

“*The blood of the everlasting covenant*” implies that God works to mend us completely based on His covenant promise and consideration of the price paid for our salvation; that is, since blood is the currency of the spirit world, and we were purchased with His blood, “*making us perfect*” is His sight is a continuation of His promise.

### **Notes:**

There is an illusion here to Isaiah 63:11 “*Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock?*” Here the shepherds are no doubt Moses and Aaron (Psalm 77:20), God having delivered the people from death also brought Moses and Aaron out of the Red Sea to lead His flock to Mt. Sinai.

His salvation at the Red Sea was based on the covenant of blood – a completion of His promise to deliver His people from bondage. The blood that saved the people from the death angel secured all other blessings including their redemption from Egypt by way of the Red Sea.

The great work of mending and bringing the people to perfection must have **a strong foundation:** God of peace, blood, covenant, raised from the dead, a living Shepherd, great in power, love, and peace.

The great work of conforming us to His will is total reconciliation of the total man to the total image of Christ; that is, that there might not be any part of the man that is not committed to the will of God. To wake up thinking one has a choice whether to do good or evil demonstrates the lack of reconciliation of the man to God. The perfect man has no choice but to do “*every good work*” and what is “*well pleasing in his sight.*”

When praying we do not look at ourselves, but to the resources of Another – *the God of peace*. We start with the fact of God's accomplishments through the Son, and reach for the impossible – perfection. Let us remember, the Good Shepherd died for us to save us from the penalty of sin and that the Great Shepherd lives to save us from the power of sin. One day the Chief Shepherd will come and save us from the presence of sin.

The “*God of peace*” is used six times in Paul's epistles (Romans 15:13; 16:20; Philippians 4:7; 4:9; Colossians 3:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:23)

The title “*God of Peace*” acts like a benediction over our restless lives, unsettled hearts, and heated conflicts to bring us peace that we might walk where angels walk (MacLaren).

Tapping into the “*God of Peace*” would calm their fears, temper their anger, repair relationships, and restore their ability to pursue holiness.

This “*God of Peace*” dwells above the conflicts, gloominess, and irritations common to men; and in His presence the restless heart can find shalom. His peace can shed light on our shadows, calm the waves on our turbulent seas, minister sweetness where there is bitterness, and bring a dove's wing where there are clenched fists and tight jaws. “My peace” I give unto you.

The only way to obtain peace is to be good – “Make you perfect in every good work to do his will . . . “*There can be no peace on earth where there is not conformity to Heaven's will*. Want peace? Then lighten the load on your ship and throw your mutinous captain-self overboard, your iron anchor attached to the underside of this world, your heavy burdens of collecting silver and gold, and your steel desires to have your way on this voyage.

*Philippians 4:9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you*

Moreover, the peace of God orders our holiness (See: 1 Thessalonians 5:23). What a man needs for peace is to surrender his vessel to be captained by the Lord Jesus Christ, to allow His peace to be the steersman, and to debar frivolous anger, lusts, and bitterness from standing at the helm.

Exercising the peace of God impacts our relationships for good (Colossians 3:15).

The peace of God acts like an umpire guarding and protecting our hearts (Philippians 4:7).

This peace can only come by prayer. The heart is like a stormy sea tossing our ship on top of white caps and then burying our vessels under tons of wet darkness, fear, and marine debris. Only Christ can say, “Peace, be still!:

*Come Thou fount of every blessing*

*Tune my heart to sing Thy grace*

*Streams of mercy never ceasing*

*Call for songs of loudest praise*

This passage is the only reference to the resurrection of Christ in the epistle. We do not serve a dead martyr, but a living Savior – the high priest of our profession within the veil – the living Shepherd – the Great Shepherd of God's flock risen from the dead ready to perfect us.

We don't have to live in the shadows away from the sunshine or sail our vessel on stormy seas on cold, windy nights. Believing in His peace and praying to the Great Shepherd increases the possibilities of happy, holy service. The power that raised Christ from the dead is available to us. There is no mountain we cannot climb; no river we cannot cross; and, no burden we cannot carry.

So, like a little bird, open your mouth and let him fill it. He lives to provide for you; to protect you, and to perfect you. Don't worry about storms on the sea, or getting lost in the forest, or wolves in the pasture, or thornbushes near the path. The Great Shepherd of the sheep leads. Will you follow?

### A CRUSHED SNAKE



MacClaren titled this verse, "*A Crushed Snake*" and his thoughts are recorded here.

**Romans 16:20: And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.**

*"There are three other Scriptural sayings which may have been floating in the Apostle's mind when he penned this triumphant assurance. 'Thou shalt bruise his head'; the great first Evangel-we are to be endowed with Christ's power: 'The lion and the adder thou shalt trample under foot'-all the strength that was given to ancient saints is ours; 'Behold! I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy'-the charter of the seventy is the perennial gift to the Church." (MacLaren)*

"Echoing all these great words, Paul promises the Roman Christians that 'the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.'"

Now, when any special characteristic is thus ascribed to God, as when He is called '*the God of patience*' or '*the God of hope*,' in the preceding chapter, the characteristic selected has some bearing on the prayer or promise following.

For example, this same designation, '*the God of peace*,' united with the other, 'that brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,' is laid as the foundation of the prayer for the perfecting of the readers of the Epistle to the Hebrews in every good work. It is, then, because of that great name that the Apostle is sure, and would have his Roman brethren to be sure, that Satan shall shortly be bruised under their feet.

No doubt there may have been some reference in Paul's mind to what he had just said about those who caused divisions in the Church; but, if there is such reference, it is of secondary importance.



Paul is gazing on all the great things in God which make Him the God of peace, and in them all he sees grounds for the confident hope that His power will be exerted to crush all the sin that breaks His children's peace.

Now the first thought suggested by these words is the solemn glimpse given of *the struggle that goes on in every Christian soul*.

**Two antagonists** are at hand-grips in every one of us. On the one hand, the '*God of peace*,' on the other, 'Satan.' If you believe in the personality of the One, do not part with the belief in the personality of the other. If you believe that a divine power and Spirit is ready to help and strengthen you, do not think so lightly of the enemies that are arrayed against you as to falter in the belief that there is a great personal Power, rooted in evil, who is warring against each of us.

Ah, brethren! we live far too much on the surface, and we neither go down deep enough to the dark source of the Evil, nor rise high enough to the radiant Fountain of the Good. It is a shallow life that strikes that antagonism of God and Satan out of itself. And though the belief in a personal tempter has got to be very unfashionable nowadays, I am going to venture to say that you may measure accurately the vitality and depth of a man's religion by the emphasis with which he grasps the thought of that great antagonism. There is *a star of light*, and there is *a star of darkness*; and they revolve, as it were, round one centre.

But whilst, on the one hand, our Christianity is made shallow in proportion as we ignore this solemn reality, on the other hand, it is sometimes paralysed and perverted by our misunderstanding of it. For, notice, 'the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet.' Yes, *it is God that bruises, but He uses our feet to do it*. It is God from whom the power comes, but the power works through us, and we are neither merely the field, nor merely the prize, of the conflict between these two, but we ourselves have to put all our pith into the task of keeping down the flat, speckled head that has the poison gland in it. 'The God of peace'-blessed be His Name-'shall bruise Satan *under your feet*,' but it will need the tension of your muscles, and the downward force of your heel, if the wriggling reptile is to be kept under.

Turn, now, to the other thought that is here, the promise and *pledge of victory in the name, the God of peace*. I have already referred to two similar designations of God in the previous chapter, and if we take them in union with this one in our text, what a wonderfully beautiful and strengthening threefold view of that divine nature do we get!

'*The God of patience and consolation*' is the first of the linked three. It heads the list, and blessed is it that it does, because, after all, sorrow makes up a very large proportion of the experience of us all, and what most men seem to themselves to need most is a God that will bear their sorrows with them and help them to bear, and a God that will comfort them. But, supposing that He has been made known thus as the source of endurance and the God of all consolation, He becomes 'the God of hope,' for a dark background flings up a light foreground, and a comforted sorrow patiently endured is mighty to produce a radiant hope. The rising of the muddy waters of the Nile makes the heavy crops of 'corn in Egypt.' So the name 'the God of hope' fitly follows the name '*the God of patience and consolation*.'

Then we come to the name in my text, built perhaps on the other two, or at least reminiscent of them, and recalling them, 'the God of peace,' *who, through patience and consolation, through hope, and through many another gift, breathes the benediction of His own great tranquillity and unruffled calm over our agitated, distracted, sinful hearts*.

In connection with one of those previous designations to which I have referred, the Apostle has a prayer very different in form from this, but identical in substance, when he says 'the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.' Is not that closely allied to the promise of my text, *'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly'*?

Is there any surer way of '*bruising Satan*' under a man's feet than filling him 'with joy and peace in believing'? What can the Devil do to that man? If his soul is saturated, and his capacities filled, with that pure honey of divine joy, will he have any taste for the coarse dainties, the leeks and the garlic, that the Devil offers him? Is there any surer way of delivering a man from the temptations of his own baser nature, and the solicitations of this busy intrusive world round about him, than to make him satisfied with the goodness of the Lord, and conscious in his daily experience of 'all joy and peace'? Fill the vessel with wine, and there is no room for baser liquors or for poison. I suppose that the way by which you and I, dear friends, will most effectually conquer any temptations, is by falling back on the superior sweetness of divine joys. When we live upon manna we do not crave onions. So He '*will bruise Satan under your feet*' by giving that which will arm your hearts against all his temptations and all his weapons. Blessed be God for the way of conquest, which is the possession of a supream good!

But then, notice how beautifully too this name, '*the God of peace,*' comes in to suggest that even in the strife there may be tranquillity.

I remember in an old church in Italy a painting of an Archangel with his foot on the dragon's neck, and his sword thrust through its scaly armour.

It is perhaps the feebleness of the artist's hand, but I think rather it is the clearness of his insight, which has led him to represent the victorious angel, in the moment in which he is slaying the dragon, *as with a smile on his face, and not the least trace of effort in the arm*, which is so easily smiting the fatal blow. Perhaps if the painter could have used his brush better he would have put more expression into the attitude and the face, but I think it is better as it is.

***We, too, may achieve a conquest over the dragon which, although it requires effort, does not disturb peace.*** There is a possibility of bruising that slippery head under my foot, and yet not having to strain myself in the process. We may have 'peace subsisting at the heart of endless agitation.' Do you remember how the Apostle, in another place, gives us the same beautiful-though at first sight contradictory-combination when he says, 'The peace of God shall garrison your heart'?

*'My soul! there is a country*

*Far, far beyond the stars,*

*Where stands an armed sentry,*

*All skilful in the wars.'*

And her name is Peace, as the poet goes on to tell us. Ah, brethren! if we lived nearer the Lord, we should find it more possible to '*fight the good fight of faith,*' and yet to have '*our feet shod with the preparedness of the gospel of peace.*'

*'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet'; and in bruising He will give you His peace to do it, and His peace in doing it, and in still greater measure after doing it.* For every struggle of the Christian

soul adds something to the subsequent depth of its tranquillity. And so the name of the God of peace is our pledge of victory in, and of deepened peace after, our warfare with sin and temptation.

Lastly, note the swiftness with which Paul expects that this process shall be accomplished.

I dare say that he was thinking about the coming of the Lord, when all the fighting and struggle would be over, and that when he said '*God shall bruise him under your feet shortly*,' there lay in the back of his mind the thought, '*the Lord is at hand*.' But be that as it may, there is another way of looking at the words. They are not in the least like our experience, are they? '*Shortly!*'-and here am I, a Christian man for the last half century perhaps; and have I got much further on in my course? Have I brought the sin that used to trouble me much down, and is my character much more noble, Christ-like, than it was long years ago? Would other people say that it is? Instead of '*shortly*' we ought to put '*slowly*' for the most of us. But, dear friend, the ideal is swift conquest, and it is our fault and our loss, if the reality is sadly different.

There are a great many evils that, unless they are conquered suddenly, have very small chance of ever being conquered at all. You never heard of a man being cured of his love of intoxicating drink, for instance, by a gradual process. The serpent's life is not crushed out of it by gradual pressure, but by one vigorous stamp of a nervous heel.

But if my experience as a Christian man does not enable me to set to my seal that this text is true, the text itself will tell me why. It is '*the God of peace*' that is going to '*bruise Satan*.' Do you keep yourself in touch with Him, dear friend? And do you let His powers come uninterruptedly and continuously into your spirit and life? It is sheer folly and self-delusion to wonder that the medicine does not work as quickly as was promised, if you do not take the medicine. The slow process by which, at the best, many Christian people '*bruise Satan under their feet*,' during which he hurts their heels more than they hurt his head, is mainly due to their breaking the closeness and the continuity of their communion with God in Jesus Christ.

But, after all, it is Heaven's chronology that we have to do with here. '*Shortly*,' and it will be '*shortly*,' if we reckon by heavenly scales of duration. *Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*

*'The Lord will help her, and that right early.' 'The Lord is at hand.' When we get yonder, ah! how all the long years of fighting will have dwindled down, and we shall say 'the Lord did help me, and that right early,' and though there may have been more than threescore years and ten of fighting, that, while we were in the thick of it, did not seem to come to much, we shall then look back and say: 'Yes, Lord, it was but for a moment, and it has brought me to the undying day of Eternal Peace.'"* (Maclaren).

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Isaiah 30:15 For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In (your) returning and rest shall ye be saved; in (your) quietness (rest) and in (your) confidence (trust) **shall be your strength**: and ye would not.

## 59. THE BLESSING OF SANCTIFICATION

*1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

### DEFINITION OF SANCTIFICATION

The verb *sanctify* (hagiazō) means “to make holy” or “to set apart.” The noun *hagiasmos* (Grk) is the word *sanctification*. To be holy is to be separated and devoted to obedience to God’s law-word (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2).

Holiness is renewing the whole man in the image of God.

*1 Thessalonians 4:4ff For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication..*

*1 Thessalonians 4:7. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

### EXTENTIONS OF SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is a **pre-conversion** work of the Spirit (1 Peter 1:2). Every person who believes in Christ, comes to Him because the Spirit has plowed the field of the heart making it ready to receive the seed of life. Sanctification is a present completed state at which men enter through faith (Acts 26:18). The term “sanctified” is a perfect, passive participle indicating that once a person places their faith in Christ, they are sanctified; i.e. sanctification is the immediate result of faith. **It is a positional truth.**

Sanctification is also an **unfinished** work because the believer is called to continually separate himself from evil (1 Thessalonians 4:3). It is the present will of God for every believer. He is **not** to be *conformed to this world* (Romans 12:2) **nor** to his *former lusts* (1 Peter 1:14). The Greek participle “*suschmatizo, menoī*” (conforming) is in the present tense indicating the immediate need to daily resist former lusts that pull and tug at the heart all through life.

### MEANING OF THE WORD “HOLY”

**Theisson** (1992):

*God is absolutely separate from and exalted above all his creatures . . . separate from all moral evil . . . the perfection of God in all that he is . . . (p. 84).*

**Hodge** (1992):

*This is a general term for the moral excellence of God (1 Samuel 2:2).*

**New Bible Dictionary** (1987):

*Holiness is not so much a relation of the creature to the Creator as of the Creator to the creature . . . it is the holiness of God that underlines that separation of life and distinctiveness of character that belong to God's people . . . It is basically a term for the moral excellence of God and his freedom from all limitation in his moral perfection (p. 487).*

**Unger's Bible Dictionary** (Unger, 1980 edition):

*By the holiness of God, it is not implied that he is subject to some law or standard of moral excellence external to himself, but that all moral law and perfection have their external and unchangeable basis in his own nature (p. 494).*

**Stockton:**

*When the Scripture says God is holy, it seeks to communicate at least three facts about God: (a) that God is independent and absolute, not being subject to any law or principle outside Himself; that is, He is the standard of all that is good. His law defines what is good; (b) that God is so transcendent in his position, so exalted in supremacy, so pure in His perfection, so luminous in His glory, so flawless in his character that He is in a state of such pure perfection so that even the best of men are not able to approach Him. The strongest among us is completely disqualified from seeing the pure light of his presence. Coming in contact with such purity of holiness insures their destruction if possible to do so; and (c) that God is gloriously pure and perfect: that is, He is unsoiled, unspotted, unblemished, unadulterated, untainted, and uncontaminated by evil.*

### **Flesh and Spirit (Romans 8)**

The term “*flesh*” refers to *unregenerate men*, **not** to carnally-minded Christians. The term “*Spirit*” refers to regenerated men delivered from the power of sin. It does **not** refer to “*spirit-filled*” believers though all believers have the Holy Spirit.

This passage does **not** teach Christians have a “sin nature” they cannot conquer or that the Christians is a Dr. Jekyll and Dr. Hyde with a split personality.

***Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.***

The “*therefore*” refers back to Paul’s treatise on the plight of unredeemed Jews in chapter 7 – that while they knew the law of God they were carnal without power to keep the law.

This text is the heart of Paul’s gospel. Now that Christ has come and offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin, there is **not** now **nor** ever will be “condemnation” for those “in Christ Jesus.” “*In Christ*” stands in juxtaposition to those who are “*in Adam*” (Romans 5:12ff) experiencing the tyranny of sin reigning over them.

“*walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*” is **not** found in early manuscripts. Apparently, some zealous scribe added the words in order to implore the existing church to be more spiritual.

The point of this passage is that since Christ was judged for the sins of the elect, there is not one drop of wrath left for the believer to endure. He is free of guilt and free from the power of sin.

***2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.***

The “*law of the Spirit of life*” defines a rule that life reigns in those who have been baptized into the history of Christ, the Second Adam (Romans 6:1-14); the “*law of sin and death*” identifies the effects on those still living under the tyrannical history of the first Adam.

When a man believes, the Spirit takes the man out of Adam and places him into Christ so he may share in the marvelous benefits of His triumphal history. Paul is discussing a change in position or residence in relation to Adam and not a change in character though the character of the man in Christ will grow to be more like Him.

Paul uses the word “*baptism*” (baptize) to describe the change of status for one who believes.

The word “*baptize*” simply means “*to be placed into*.” It has nothing to do with water baptism and everything to do with a change in one’s spiritual position or citizenship. It has nothing to do with experience and everything to do with *a change in standing*.

By way of illustration, the believer is not in a some old downtown bus terminal traveling to some city ghetto, but in a modern airport flying a new jet out of bondage to freedom.

Because he is “*in Christ*,” He is alive to God and dead to sin (Romans 6:11). Sin **cannot** reign over him. Life reigns.

***3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:***

The Jews saw the law (Torah and the Talmud) as a mediator between God and man. The problem with this diegesis is that the law told a man what was right, but it did **not** empower the man to do what was right. The law is good, but it provided no power to do good.

But, in the economy of the gospel, the Spirit saves the man from the penalty of sin and then proceeds to empower the man to keep the law.

“*weak through the flesh*” exposes the inability of fallen man to keep the law.

Notice “*those in the flesh*” (sarx) are unsaved, unregenerated men still in Adam; “*those in the Spirit*” are redeemed men or Christian-men. The “*flesh*” is **not** a reference to the sin nature any more than spirit is a reference to the spiritual nature.

Paul addresses **two categories of men**: (1) those in Adam or “the flesh;” and, (2) those in Christ or “the Spirit.” He is **not** addressing the alleged hypothesis of “two natures within Christian men.” All Christians are “*in the Spirit*” or “in Christ;” and, all non-Christians are “*in the flesh*” or “in Adam.” As no man can be in Denver and Chicago at the same time, **no** man can be “*in the Spirit*” and “*in the flesh*” at the same time.

***4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.***

“*the righteousness of the law*” – Law defines righteousness because it reflects the character of God.

The purpose of salvation is to save men from the power of sin . . . from lawlessness . . . from powerlessness.

Christ died for our sins and gave believing men His Spirit, not to free them from the law, but to empower them to keep his law. It is true, believers are not saved by law; but, they are saved in order to keep the law.

This text strikes a blow to antinomianism – the belief that the Christian man has no duty to God's moral law expressed in the Ten Commandments and relevant case law. Few things are more derelict than the presumption that men are free to choose what law they will serve. Christian men are saved from the power of sin and given the power to honor, to keep, and to obey God's law.

***5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.***

The “**they**” refers to unsaved, un-regenerated men; i.e., unbelieving Jews in chapter 7.

“*The flesh*” refers to carnal, unsaved, un-regenerated men such as Jews. “*The Spirit*” refers to justified, born again, regenerated men.

The preposition “*after*” does not refer to actions of chasing “*the flesh*,” but to one's being . . . or state of existence.

The New Living Translation translates the word “*flesh*” (*sarx*) as “sinful nature” in this section creating a false dichotomy that twists the gospel – a flawed translation. Paul is **not** addressing the believer's personal gestalt, but **two classes of humanity** – those in the flesh and those in the Spirit. Paul is **not** teaching that the individual Christian is a Dr. Jekyll and a Dr. Hyde -- a man with two natures, one good and the other evil – a man having a black dog and a white dog living inside him. God forbid!

Christians are not bifurcated. They do not have two personalities, two natures, or a "double" mind.

If Christians have a conflict, it is not between two spiritual natures but the fact that the redeemed man still lives in an unredeemed body.

***6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.***

The word “*minded*” (*phronema*) refers to the anchor, core, or inner engines of one's thoughts. The word “*carnally*” (*sarx*) refers to the orientation of unsaved, un-regenerate man in Adam (Romans 5:12ff).

Unsaved men love the world of death, think death, and do things that produce death. But, saved men are “*spiritually minded*” (genitive); i.e. their thinking is driven by, energized by, and directed by the Spirit which embodies “*life and peace*.”

***7 Because the carnal mind is enmity (echthra) against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.***

The “*carnal mind*” refers to the driving force or thinking process of unsaved, un-regenerated, unredeemed men who are hostile (*echthra*) to God. It is not possible for natural, carnal men in Adam to subject themselves to the “*law of God*.” Nor is it possible for unsaved Jews trained in the law to do what the law requires – *they are carnal sold under sin* (Romans 7).

***8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.***

“flesh” (sarx) is ***not*** describing a “carnal-minded Christian.” It is addressing the fact that the unredeemed man does not have the capacity to obey God’s law and to please Him. Every thought, word, and deed of Adam’s children leads to death of relationships.

***9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.***

“ye” refers to Roman Christians, saved Jews and Gentiles. Believers are ***not*** in Adam; they are ***not*** in the sarx (flesh) without a capacity to do what is right. Christians are part of a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17); those in the sarx are a part of the old creation in Adam.

The conjunction “*but*” (alla) is a strong adversity. Christians are “*in the Spirit*.” Every believer, the mature and immature, are in the Spirit; i.e. “*in Christ*” sharing the power of His marvelous, victorious history (Romans 6:1-14).

***10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.***

“you” is plural referring to the Roman Christians.

Paul introduces a true dichotomy – the difference between the soul (spirit) and the body. The soul of the believer is saved; that is, the soul is energized by the “*life*” of the “*Spirit*.” Though his soul is saved, his body is “*unredeemed*”; that is, his spirit is governed by the life of the Spirit, but his body is not yet regenerated. Consequently, there is an actual tension between the saved soul of a man and his unredeemed body (Romans 12:1).

God’s salvation plan involves not only the soul, but the whole man.

The redemption of the body (Romans 8:11 ff) awaits the coming of Christ at the end of history.

***11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.***

Verses 11- 28 transitions from matters of the soul to matters of the body: Adoption, redemption, subjection to the spirit, the Spirit's help with physical infirmities, and the hope of a redeemed creation.

Until then, the Christian, gladly lives his life by the power of the Spirit bringing his body in subjection to the will of God. He believes in Providence knowing that out of struggles, good comes.

**ILLUSTRATIONS OF HOLINESS**

**A high voltage wire:** God is like a high voltage wire. If a man (who is grounded) grasps with his bare hands, he would be burned to a crisp. Men unable to seize high voltage wires without being burnt to a crisp. God’s holiness is like this: to be in His presence for a single second would result in immediate destruction.

**Light:** According to Einstein’s theory, light is so constant in the universe, that any attempt to alter light would change the structure of every existing thing.



## **HOLINESS AND MEN**

Things and people can be made holy; that is, they can be *set apart* for a special use of God. What is given as an act of devotion must be *clean* and *noble*. For example, housewives often set apart beautiful plates for display on a living room wall. The plates are set apart from the use of a common everyday eating utensils. Things dedicated to God, whether people or things, must be separated from the common and the corrupt for a spiritual use.

Jonathan Edwards said:

*"I went on with my eager pursuit after more holiness and conformity to Christ. The heaven I desired was a heaven of holiness." (Quoted by E.M. Bounds, 1913).*

## **FACTORS OF HOLINESS**

### **THE STANDARD OF HOLINESS**

God Himself is the standard of holiness (Leviticus 11:44, 45). The measuring stick of what is right or wrong is neither how we feel nor what other men may do or say. "Everybody is doing it" is not the standard for man's behavior. Rather, God's law is the objective standard of what is good, what is right, what is normal; and, Christ is the subjective standard of holiness.

*Leviticus 20:26 And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy.*

*1 Peter 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.*

The verb "*so be ye holy*" is an aorist, passive, imperative. The passive informs us that we must cooperate with the Spirit who leads us to be holy. The aorist imperative demands that we initiate the process at once. The standard for all our actions and behavior is the character of God as revealed by His Commands. Note that holiness begins in the home (Leviticus 19:2-3). The command to "*be holy*" is followed by a series of commands in Leviticus; that is obedience to God's law is the means to holiness. Sanctification is in obedience to law and the exercise of grace to our fellow man.

### **SCOPE OF HOLINESS**

Holiness includes the setting apart of man's spirit, soul, and body for God's use. God is interested in the sanctity of our minds, emotions, thoughts, desires, intentions, hopes, dreams, actions, including flesh and skin. Offering up of our body as an instrument of holiness has been the most difficult challenge for believers. We are physical beings in a material world. Christians have not always been comfortable pursuing holiness in body fully of sensual desires. Christians have resorted to all kinds of deprivations in the pursuit of spirituality. But, these mortifications have never been effective or lasting. Neither a weak mind nor a weak body make a strong spirit.

*1 Thessalonians 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and (I pray God) your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

### **EFFECTS OF HOLINESS**

Holiness touches our habits, our character, our thoughts, our speech, and our relationships.

*James 1:19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.*

### **DURATION OF HOLINESS**

Holiness is only relevant to this life.

*1 Thessalonians 3:13 To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.*

*Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

### **VALUE OF HOLINESS**

Holiness cannot save us, but it can beautify us. Holiness is esthetic, not meritorious; i.e. it does not add to our salvation, but it does demonstrate and verify salvation. Holiness is not accomplished through psychological therapy, or rejecting the material world, or poverty, or employment of a set of spiritual gymnastics. Holiness is accomplished by fellowship with the Savior. ***Holiness is not achieved by looking inside to discover our imperfections, but by looking outside of ourselves to discover the perfections of Christ.***

*2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face **beholding** as in a glass **the glory of the Lord**, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

### **NECESSITY OF HOLINESS**

Holiness is a benefit, an effect of our salvation.

*Hebrews 3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.*

*Hebrews 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

### **AGENT OF HOLINESS**

The fruit of holiness is produced by the Holy Spirit but it also takes the effort of Christians; that is, holiness involves the work of the Spirit as well as the cooperation of men with the Spirit (Romans 15:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2).

*1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

*1 Peter 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;*

### **HUMAN FACTORS IN HOLINESS**

Unlike justification, holiness is **not** substitutionary. Man must participate in the process by obedience to God's laws. In salvation, God does it all. Men are brought into a right relationship with God, not by obedience to law, but by the obedience of faith — faith in Christ.

In sanctification, however, believers are called to cooperate with God in the sanctification process. While it is true man can do nothing to earn salvation, there is much he can do to develop sanctification. Holiness is not achieved by surrender alone. We are **not** called “*to let go and let God*,” that is, “let go” and plunge in to **wretched subjectivism**. Rather, sanctification demands that believers “trust and obey.”

*1 Peter 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.*

*1 Peter 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers (resident aliens) and pilgrims (temporary travelers), abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*

### **MEANS OF HOLINESS**

Holiness is accomplished by interacting with the **truth**. Man is **not** sanctified by archaeological journeys into one's past or by psychotherapy or just by “making the right choice.” Sanctification comes when the believer seriously interacts with the Word of God, believes it, and obeys it. *Obedience is the means; law is the objective*. We live in a twisted, sinful world. There is sin within and sin without. Life involves choices between good and evil, between the good and the greater good, between a lesser evil and the greater evil. Only by a devotion to truth and the discovery of truth can any man hope to be holy.

*John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; Thy Word is truth.*

### **FRUITS OF HOLINESS**

Holiness produces good works in and through us. But, what is good? Only God has the authority to define “good.” When man defines “good,” man protects sins and redefines crime in relation to the State; e.g., terms like “therapeutic abortion” disguises the murder of innocent, unborn children.

The subjunctive verb in the following verse holds out the possibility of being fully qualified to serve. The Word of God is totally sufficient to equip men to live holy lives. Christians do not need “self-help” books or psychotherapy. They need God's Word. It is good to love, but love is defined by God's law (Romans 13:8).

Love is a fruit of holiness, but *undiscriminating, permissive love* is a product of the poisonous tree.

*2 Timothy 3:17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

*Psalms 119:6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.*

*Psalms 119:9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

### **STANDARD OF HOLINESS**

Holiness is epitomized in one standard, one model, one paradigm: Christ. Our Sovereign is the subjective standard of holiness; i.e. the visible, tangible, historical example of what it means to be devoted to the Father. The law, on the other hand, is the objective practice of those devoted to God.

*1 Peter 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.*

*Ephesians 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.*

*Colossians 2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*

### **FOUNDATION OF HOLINESS**

Holiness can only be built upon justification. While justification contains holiness, holiness does **not** contain justification. **Only** just men can practice true holiness. Pure law points to sanctification, but does not supply the means of sanctification; but grace contains sanctification and the power to be holy.

*Romans 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus . . . .*

*Romans 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. . . .*

*Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

### **WALKING TOWARDS HOLINESS**

Holiness is a life style and can be achieved in part by the following:

***Holiness is a gift of God; that is, God enables a man to be holy*** – not as a requisite for eternal life, but as a fruit of eternal life; not as a necessity to be a part of the family of God, but as mark of being in His family. Justification contain holiness, but holiness does not contain justification; those born of God become holy, but those who achieve a measure of holiness do not then become “born again.” (1 Thessalonians 3:13)

Moreover, know that salvation (justification) comes to men because of the substitutionary work of Christ on our behalf; however, sanctification is **not** substitutionary; it involves man's cooperation with the Spirit to become holy.

***Know the facts of the gospel*** (Romans 6:1-9): Knowledge of what God has done for us in Christ is a prerequisite for maturity. There is a tendency today to deemphasize knowledge as something “heady” and unnecessary. Nothing can be further from the truth as the following verses attest

*Romans 10:2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*

*Romans 15:14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.*

*Ephesians 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the **knowledge** of him:*

*Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the **knowledge** of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:*

*Philippians 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in **knowledge** and in all judgment;*

*Philippians 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the **knowledge** of Christ Jesus my Lord:*

*Colossians 1:10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the **knowledge** of God;*

**Reckon the facts as true because they are true** (Romans 6:9). The term *reckon* is a mental term meaning “to count as true.” The first command in Romans is to act on the knowledge that one is justified, regenerated, and alive to God.

**Resist sin and yield your body to God** (Romans 6:9-14). By standing on one's position in Christ, the believer now has the power to resist sin. The second duty next to reckoning is to put up a fight. Begin to resist sin's inroads, temptations, and charms.

**Avoid legalism as the means to holiness** (Romans 6:14). Legalism is **not** the same as obedience to God or perseverance in moral principle. Legalism is looking to daily works as meritorious, something to commend one to God. The natural, fleshly tendency of man is to adopt a performance based theology. There is always a temptation to judge our relationship to God based on our performance in time rather than upon the accomplishments of Christ for eternity. Legalism is proud. Resting in God's justification produces humility.

**Be filled with God's Spirit** (Ephesians 5:18). The command “*be being filled*” with the Spirit is the key to sanctification. Sanctification comes from a combination of the believer's submission to the Spirit as well as the Spirit's infused power. When a man believes, he is graciously given the Holy Spirit as a gift of grace. Thus, grace supplies the means and power for being holy. Man is not left alone to struggle in his own weak way to be holy. *To be filled with the Spirit (subjectively) is to be filled with the Word objectively* (Colossians 3:15-16).

**Walk in the Spirit** (Galatians 5:18ff). This verse means “to keep on keeping on keeping in step with the Spirit.” Pictured here is the believer as a soldier marching in step with the commands of a drill sergeant; that is, the Holy Spirit will lead us to truth, to obedience to the law of God — the law as opposed to inward journeys, self-originating impulses, wretched subjectivism, and antinomianism.

**Obey the Lord** (Romans 6:16). Sanctification is **not** substitutionary. It demands positive obedience, an act of the will by the believer.

**Preach against sin** (Isaiah 58:1): Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

### **RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH AND SANCTIFICATION (Romans 1:17)**

Two problems exist: (a) a failure to separate root and fruit; to separate justification and sanctification, and (b) a failure to link faith-righteousness with holiness. **Luther** broke the synthesis by putting the righteousness of faith outside of men. He called it *passive righteousness* -- a heavenly reality. He called earthly righteousness *active righteousness*. **Rome** included righteousness in holiness: the **Reformers** included holiness in righteousness. **Rome** included justification in sanctification; the reformers insisted sanctification was included in justification (Brinsmead).

Justification is *sola fide*, but not so with sanctification. Sanctification involves an act of man's will in cooperation with the Spirit's leading.

Justification is possessed by faith; sanctification is achieved by faithfulness.

The righteousness by faith is vicarious righteousness completely *outside* the believer. It is entirely *outside* the believer's experience. One ruins faith-righteousness by mingling it with the necessity of obedience for holiness.

One cannot add to the finished work of Christ upon which justification rests, but one can add to the unfinished work of the Spirit upon whom sanctification is dependent.

*Sanctification includes human responsibility; justification does not.* Sanctification depends on the continuous work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer; justification depends on the completed work of Christ at Calvary. Justification is obtained by *sola fide*; Sanctification is attained by faithfulness.

Justification is about the work of Christ for us on the cross; Sanctification is about the work of the Spirit in us in this pilgrim journey.

The *passive* work of justification is based on the active *substitutionary* work of Christ; *active* sanctification requires the believer's cooperative *participation* in the Spirit's objective for holiness.

Sanctification involves man purifying himself (1 John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 7:1). God does **not** act upon man as if he were only a machine. He does **not** live in the believer in such a way that He does the obeying *for* him. Sanctification is **not** substitutionary. To "let go and let God" is **not** Scriptural!

*"To confuse (fuse) the action of God and the action of the believer is actually a form of pantheism" (Brinsmead)*

To inject sanctification into justification is **pantheism**. When we say, "God is all that is" or that "Justification and sanctification are one in the same," we plunge into *theological pantheism*. If sanctification is fused into justification, then we are partly saved by Christ and partly saved by the Holy Spirit; partly saved by Christ's obedience, and partly saved by our own obedience; partly saved by His works; partly saved by our working together with the Spirit.

The problem with this view is that it truncates the gospel. It weakens the gospel by adding man's works to that of Calvary. It lacks power to save and to save completely. Justification is possible because of the obedience of Christ to God's law on our behalf; sanctification in the life of the believer is possible when the Christian obeys God's law with the help of the Spirit.

**Wiersbe** says...

*“Do not confuse justification and sanctification. Sanctification is the process whereby God makes the believer more and more like Christ. Sanctification may change from day to day. Justification never changes. When the sinner trusts Christ, God declares him righteous, and that declaration will never be repealed.” (Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor)*

A healthy saint believes that he was so sick he could only be made whole in Christ. The best saint believes he is so sinful, that he can add nothing to the work of Christ; when saved, he believes the gospel is so powerful, that he can be delivered from the strength of sin.

The life of the age to come has broken into history in the person and work of Christ. The eschatological creation has been planted in the life of the believer. The blessings of the covenant have been secured. ***The life of the kingdom has been planted into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, not to justify us, but to beautify us; not to save us from the penalty of sin, but to sanctify us in relationship to the power of sin.*** All the blessings of the age to come was won for humanity in Christ and are available to be enjoyed now by the believer who walks by faith in obedience to God's Law-word — *the obedience of faith for justification, and obedience to the Holy Spirit for sanctification.*

### **NATURE OF TRUE HOLINESS**

- Justification is a gift to those who believe – a completed work; Sanctification is a continual work by those who are right with God which is never complete in this life.
- Holiness does not secure salvation, but it does enhance the integrity of fellowship.
- Holiness is inherent to justification; but justification is not included in holiness.
- Holiness is a highway upon which only believers have a right to travel. A person who has not entered into the gate of justification has no power to walk on the highway of holiness.
- One is not saved by holiness, but they are saved to it. They are not saved by it, but they cannot be saved without it.
- Holiness is won by those with life; justification is a gift to those who are dead in trespasses and sins.
- Obedience to law is a product of sanctification; justification is a product of Christ's obedience to law.

### **FACTS ON HOLINESS**

**Holiness is eschatological:** Since justification is an eschatological gift of the age to come and holiness is contained in it, then sanctification is the beginning of His eschatological glorification now.

**Holiness is a now/not-yet concept:** Sanctification has begun now; it will be completed later -- the not/yet of glorification. It is the first fruits of glory. Since the Holy Spirit is the gift of the eschatological age, and we have the Holy Spirit; then we participate in the work of the age to come now in advance of its cataclysmic entrance into history. Holiness is the fruit of the present work of the eschatological Spirit. Just as the Spirit will transform the dead in the age to come, He has begun transforming corruption into incorruption (spiritually) now in this present evil age. Since holiness is the beginning of eternal life, and

eternal life is a gift of the age to come, then we enjoy the first fruits of the eschatological age now by participating in the call to be holy.

**Holiness is for beautification, not justification.** It does not save the soul, but it does beautify the whole man.

**Holiness is wholistic:** Just as salvation includes the whole of man; sanctification includes the whole man: spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23). All work and labor, therefore, is to be considered a sacred matter.

**Holiness is practical conformity to law:** While man's obedience to law does not contribute to justification, obedience to God's law contributes to the sanctification of the man.

**Holiness is temporal:** It begins now, but will become completed at the resurrection from the dead.

**Holiness is communal:** It not only involves the individual, but the whole community of God's people: "all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26).

**Holiness is not racial:** God wants all his children, rich and poor, black or white, European or Brazilian, male or female to be conformed to His image. God's law. It is not parochial, it transcends race, sex, age, status, and culture.

*Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

## **JUSTIFICATION VS. SANCTIFICATION**

| SUBJECT   | JUSTIFICATION                                  | SANCTIFICATION                    |
|-----------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Need      | A right standing with God as Judge (cleansing) | A right walk with God as a Father |
| Category  | A legal term                                   | A moral term                      |
| Time      | Eschatological (futuristic)                    | Temporal (This life)              |
| Nature    | Judicial (legal rights)                        | Esthetic (beautifies us)          |
| Meaning   | To declare righteous                           | To be made righteous              |
| Necessity | The Obedience of Christ                        | Man's obedience                   |



|            |                         |                        |
|------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Agent      | Christ                  | Spirit                 |
| Basis      | Substitutionary         | Participatory          |
| Qualifies  | The believer for heaven | A believer for service |
| Guarantees | Eternal relationship    | Present fellowship     |
| Means      | By Faith                | By obedience           |
| Cleansing  | By blood                | By the Word of God     |
| Result     | Peace with God          | Peace of God           |

## **ERRORS SURROUNDING THE DOCTRINE OF HOLINESS**

Errors regarding holiness abound with just men plunging into impulsive, self-driven rituals and carnal men plunging into wretched subjectivism such as flaming tongues, holy laughter, and vigorous spiritual projections.

These errors include the following:

- Beliefs that holiness is necessary for justification.
- Beliefs that applications of law expired with the Old Testament dispensation; and,
- Beliefs that God's law only applies to Christian men and not the State; and,
- Beliefs that grace is opposite of law; and,
- Beliefs that obedience to God's law is legalistic, formal, and unrelated to life under grace; and,
- Beliefs that restrict holiness to private piety to the exclusion of public duty; and,
- Beliefs in psychology, introspection, and archaeological journeys into one's past; and,
- Beliefs that sanctification is associated with emotional binges as in the Pentecostal Movement; and,
- Beliefs that sanctification involves wild, spiritual gymnastics that prove the existence of God; and,
- Beliefs that seek spiritual experiences apart from the guidelines of law; and,
- Beliefs that judging actions and behavior as sinful are opposed to true spirituality; and,

- Beliefs that result in irrational behavior motivated by a G-d experiences; and,
- Beliefs that non-discriminating love is acceptable spirituality; and,
- Beliefs in radical antinomianism; and,
- Beliefs in radical re-installment of Judaism and the practice of Jewish customs; and,
- Beliefs in man-made good works; .i.e. good as defined by modern, humanistic man; and,
- Beliefs that that redefine godliness to include same-sex marriages; and,
- Beliefs that create a dualism that rejects the world, the material, and the body in order to achieve a higher spirituality.

**Ellicott** has this to say about holiness being necessary to “see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14):

*“This Epistle especially brings Him before us as the Sanctifier (Hebrews 2:11; Hebrews 13:12), who leads us into the presence of God (Hebrews 10:19), we must rather look on these words as akin to Matthew 5:8, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Revelation 22:4).*

**Barnes** shares this insight:

*“Instead of yielding to contending passions and to a spirit of war; instead of seeking revenge on your persecutors and foes, make it rather your aim to be holy. Let that be the object of your pursuit; the great purpose of your life.”*

**In Summary, holiness is a path of obedience to God’s law.** While obedience does not justify the man, obedience does sanctify the man. Being holy is no easy task as there are many pseudo-religious paths to holiness including but not limited to antinomianism, wretched subjectivism, tongues, impulsive self-devised devotion, dualism that separates the physical from the spiritual, inward journeys by means of psychological models, hyper-sensationalism, ritual church practices, and self-imposed spiritual gymnastics. Holy people obey, but are not self-righteous. Holy people love, but not indiscriminately. Holy people are good as God defines goodness.

## **60. THE BLESSING OF CLEANSING**

### **THE MEANING OF “WASH” IN JOHN 13**

At the Last Supper (John 13), Jesus arose from the triclinium, and washed the feet of his disciples. His act was not only one of great humility, great hospitality, but one of great teaching. It not only instructed the twelve to love and to serve, but it taught a great lesson on sanctification. The disciples were clean because of their faith in Christ, but they needed to perfect that cleansing in order to have continual fellowship with their Savior and Lord and be qualified to serve Him. The washing of the disciple’s feet is a lesson on sanctification and the necessity of perfecting holiness.

| Greek                   | LOUO                           | NIPTO   |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Verse                   | verse 10                       | verse 8                                       |
| English                 | bathe or washed                | wash or washed                                |
| Contextual Meaning      | A complete Mikvah (bath)       | Feet washing only                             |
| Theological Meaning     | Justification                  | Sanctification                                |
| Practice al Application | Trust Christ for relationship. | Confess and judge sin to maintain fellowship. |

**7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.**

These are the first words Jesus speaks in this chapter. Up until this time, we see our Lord serving and not talking. Servants act. They do not speak.

The washing is symbolic -- a lesson the Lord promised to share with them after he completed the task of washing the disciples feet.

Jesus cleansing the feet of the disciples represents the ordination of a new priesthood -- preparing them for their future ministry.

*Exodus 30:19-20 For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD:*

**8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.**

Peter had difficulty understanding that Christ, the Son of God, should be His servant. Knowing His love and receiving his love are different matters.

Before us is the master lesson of footwashing -- the value of cleansing the soul from the pollution of sin . . and of cleansing from defilement caused by being present in this world surrounded by sinners.

Peter does not wait for the after knowledge Jesus promised in verse 7. The emphasis in Peter's statement is not upon "Thou" or "my" but upon "never," "He sees no ground on which our Lord's act can possibly be one which he can permit. (Ellicott).

The emphasis in this text is not on "*Jesus*" or "*I*", but the "*not*."

Peter learned that it was **not** his place to command the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter learned that unless he accepts the love of Christ he can have no part with Him. The word "*no part*" means "*no fellowship with*;" no relationship with; no contact with; no means of serving Christ.

"*If I wash thee not . . .*" is a 3rd class conditional with the subjective -- a true condition. "*thou hast no part with me*" is an indicative, the mood of reality.

All those who are spiritually washed from the world's defilement by Christ, have a part in Christ.

*"Unless Christ should purify Peter, he could have no evidence that he was his disciple . . .  
'Unless by my doctrine and spirit I shall purify you, and remove your pride Matthew 26:33,  
your lack of constant watchfulness Matthew 26:40, your anger Matthew 26:51, your timidity  
and fear Matthew 26:70, Matthew 26:74, you can have no part in me'(Grotius)" (Barnes).*

Thus, water is a symbol of practical cleansing of the soul through confession and practically forsaking sin.

*"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13)*

- Peter learned that unless he accepts the humility of Christ, he can have no part with Him.
- Peter learned that unless he is cleansed of daily defilement, he can have no part with Him.
- Peter learned that unless he sacrifices himself for his brethren, he cannot have a part with Him.
- Peter learned that unless he surrenders to the Lordship of Christ as his authority, he can have not have a part with Him.
- Peter learned "from yesterday's pardon, we should be strengthened against this day's temptation" (Matthew Henry).

If Peter could not permit our Lord to wash his feet, how could he permit Christ to serve him as Savior at the cross . . . on on the throne after his ascension to the right hand of God?

*"Superficially these words might mean that unless Peter allowed Jesus to wash him, he could not sit at table with Him." (EGT).*

*"Christ tells him, that except he washed him, he had no part with him; that is, he should never be saved" (Matthew Poole).*

**The lesson here is one of sanctification.** Holiness is necessary to have fellowship with Christ and to be His servant: "*For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified*" (John 17:10). Sanctification involves learning His law, the discipline of confession, and the sincerity of repentance.

That Peter was struggling to understand the significance of the act is self-evident by his quick response in verse 9.

***9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.***

Peter did not fully grasp the meaning of Jesus washing his feet, but he was true to his impulsive character.

Peter reasoned, if foot washing is important, then why not give me a full bath that I can have full fellowship with Thee. Moreover, it appears that Peter considered Himself totally unclean which was not true. He learned he was a defiled saint and not a filthy, rotten sinner.

***10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.***

In saying this, Jesus acknowledge that Peter was clean . . . born again. . . and a true child of God . . . but, as a future minister he would have to undergo many washings, many periods of purification in order to be a vessel through whom Christ could work.

## **TWO WAYS OF CLEANSING**

**One: interaction with the Word of God:** One's reading and study of Scripture cleanses the soul.

*"You are clean through the word I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3-5).*

*"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26).*

**Two: Confession:** When a man trusts the Son, he is washed clean by the blood; that is, he is totally bathed (1 John 1:5-7); but, as he conducts his affairs among men in the course of life, his feet are defiled. When defiled, the man must acknowledge that defilement and confess his sins as the means of washing. The Scripture testifies that "He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Those who experience moral purification in the beginning their walk with God **must** undergo many cleansings in order to maintain that relationship. In interfacing with the world, godly men pick up "dirt," and must separate from sin again and again and again.

*"The true believer is thus washed when he receives Christ for his salvation" (Matthew Henry); and, he is cleansed from defilement when He confesses his sins (1 John 1:9).*

## **61. THE BLESSING OF A NEW PRIESTHOOD**



Another way to look at this amazing scene in John 13 is to see that Jesus was qualifying his disciples for their **new role as priests of Almighty God.**

Consider the following as evidence that Jesus washed the feet of his disciples in order to qualify them for their new ministry in the new, holy priesthood -- a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6) in a new and holy nation a.k.a. the New Israel, or the True Israel of God (1 Peter 2:9-10; Romans 9:6; Galatians 6:16).

(1) Peter refers to the church as a "*holy priesthood*" and as a "*royal priesthood*" (1 Peter 2:5-9) -- far superior to the Levitical priesthood. The church does **not** have a priesthood; **the church is a priesthood**. All believers are priests, though not all have qualified themselves to serve in this holy ministry.

(2) Jesus is the church's High Priest, the archetype of the Aaronic Priesthood (Hebrews 5). He established a new priesthood to service the grand and glorious holy temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 9:13; Ephesians 2:21).

(3) The priests in the Old Testament, Aaron and his sons, were qualified to be priests through the following sacred protocols:

- Washed with water (Leviticus 8:6)
- Clothed them with priestly vestments (8:7)
- Anointed with oil -- a symbol of the Holy Spirit (8:10)
- Identified with the bull of the sin offering (8:14)
- Identified with the ram of the burnt offering (8:19)
- Sprinkled with blood of the ordination ram -- a peace offering (8:22-23)
- blood on the right ear so they could hear the Word of God
- blood on the right thumb so they could serve the will of God
- blood on the right toe so they could walk in the house of God
- Consecrated the hands with the bread offering placed on top of the oil, fat, and blood of the ordination ram with, and then offering it to the LORD as a wave offering (cake, meal, or grain offering) -- a type of the character of Christ (8:26-29).
- Sprinkled their priestly garments with oil and blood in order to consecrate them to this ministry -- even their garments had to be clean (8:30)
- Enjoyed a fellowship consecration meal in the Tabernacle (8:31)
- Seven day period of consecration in the Tabernacle (8:32)

(4) Once ordained, Aaron and his sons, washed their hands and feet in the brazen laver every time they entered the Tent of Meeting to perform their daily duties . . . **lest they die**; that is, they not only had to be washed and cleansed when they were ordained, **they had to be washed** on a daily basis, week after week, month after month, and year after year, as a holy discipline **to maintain their qualifications to perform their priestly duties** (Exodus 30:19-20; 1 Corinthians 9:27).

***19 For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat:***

***20 When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD:***

This daily, discipline of washing with water is a giant symbolic device to educate us that (A) sin is very defiling and infectious, (B) that we live in a dirty, filthy, morally contaminated society, (C) that coming into contact with other people and modern modes of communications, we are easily defiled by the sins of others (and our own sin) (James 4:1-7); (D) that we (Christians) must be cleansed with the Washing of the Water of the Word and Confession of Sins on a daily basis in order that our prayers and service may be acceptable to Christ (Ephesians 5:26; 1 John 1:9; James 4:8).

(5) As the priestly family had to be washed, clothed, and anointed with oil, the new priesthood has to be washed, clothed, and anointed with the Spirit.

- The disciples were baptized as a figure of separation from sin, identification with Christ (the sacrifice for sins, Savior, and High Priest) and dedication to God (John 3:23; (John 4:1; Acts 2:41)
- The disciples were cleansed by the blood of the Lamb (Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7)
- The disciples were clothed in robes of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10; 2 Corinthians 5:21)
- The disciples were anointed with the oil of the Spirit (John 7:39; 1 John 2:27)
- The disciples had to personally, individually wash themselves and renew their devotion to holiness on a daily basis (1 John 1:7- 9)

**In reference to the clothing consider the following:** All priests clothed themselves in sacred garments when ministering before God and serving the duties of reconciliation. According to instruction in the Book of Exodus these garments include “*a breast piece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban and a sash.*” (28:4). When people believe in Christ, they are clothed in the holy garments of salvation. As priests in the New Holy Temple (the church), Christians receive a breast piece of truth, an ephod of salvation, a robe of righteousness, a woven tunic of peace, a turban of redemption, and a sash of faith (Ephesians 6:14-17).

Christians are required to be washed with the Water of the Word and to wear priestly vestments while offering “*up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*” and proclaiming His praises to those still trapped in darkness (1 Peter 1:5-9). Believers are required to wear these vestments (righteousness and holiness) whenever they proclaim the Gospel of Christ to the sons of darkness.

[Note: The above vestments are spiritual. However, Paul forbid men to wear a head covering, but required women to wear a physical, material veil on her head as a visible symbol of authority in temple services -- which is an icon of God's law-order. Paul advances three symbols in 1 Corinthians 11: the veil (or scarf), the bread, and the wine.] Likewise, men should be fully clothed and wear their best apparel when worshipping the Lord.

(6) Jesus washes his disciples’ feet to purify and cleanse them for their priestly service to God.

“*Unless I wash you, you have no part with me*” (the true temple of God ) (John 13:8).

The washing of the disciples feet can be compared to Exodus 30:20 wherein our Lord taught his disciples to cleanse themselves regularly from defilement in order to preserve their qualification to serve in the new priesthood.

(7) Through this simple act of foot washing, Jesus demonstrates to His disciples His eternal role as God's High Priest and Mediator and their part in the new priesthood. This act assured them, even though he would be subjected to the cross, that God would hear his prayers and the prayers of the new priests:

*"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 5:7-10).*

In John 13, our Lord performed His duty as High Priest to qualify his disciples as priests in the new priesthood, through the icon of foot washing -- an instructive tool to educate these men on the necessity of continual sanctification and the need to be cleansed from defilement.

As God's High Priest, our Lord ordained His disciples to be priests unto him. The church does not have a priesthood. It is a priesthood. Now sitting at the right hand of the Father, our Lord continues to serve on their behalf, *"he always lives to intercede for them"* (Hebrews 7:25), and will empower them through the Holy Spirit to perform their priestly duties to the glory of God. Moreover, His resurrected life stands between the disciples and death.

People sometimes ask me, "What do you do?" In my more zealous moments I say, "I am a priest of Almighty God! What do you do?"

Though this is true, I am reminded from John 13 how I must continually live a separated life and submit to the daily discipline of "self-cleansing" from defilements of the world picked up in the course of daily life.

Holiness is not an option. It is a requirement for priestly duty (1 Peter 1:15ff).

## **62. THE BLESSING OF A PERFECTED CONSCIENCE**

### ***Hebrews 10:1-19***

**Q:** How can a sensitive believer who is conscious of his sins find relief from the squawking accusations about his transgressions bellowing within his conscience – transgressions that separate him from fellowship with the Father?

The answer is in Hebrews ten.

Hebrews ten is squeezed in between chapter nine and chapter eleven;

Chapter nine announces eternal redemption and remission of sins due to the shed blood of the Savior.

Chapter ten announces the perfect effect the blood has upon the believer's conscience. Thus, a perfect conscience is based on claiming the effects of a perfect sacrifice.



Chapter eleven informs us of the importance of combining faith with the blood in order to enjoy eternal redemption.

***Hebrews 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.***

This passage addresses the first century Jewish mindset.

"*The law*" refers to the sections of the Torah that establish and fortify the Levitical System.

A "*shadow*" is an incomplete reflection of a thing. In this case, the law is a shadow of Christ and His righteousness. Likewise, the O.T. sacrifices are a shadow-type of the offering of Christ at Calvary. The Savior is not the shadow; He is the reality of the O.T. offerings.

Like shadows cannot be heard, touched, tasted or smelled, the Torah and the sacrifices offered could not silence the blaring sirens coming from a guilty conscience. What these shadows could not satisfy, the Lord Jesus and His sacrifice for sin not only sprinkled the golden altar in the heavenly sanctuary to quiet the wrath of God, but touched the guilty conscience with sin-cleansing, stain-removing power.

The law and sacrifices were only silhouettes of the cross which could not remove the dark stains of sin corrupting the heart; but, Christ and His work at the cross "*perfects*" the cleansing of the conscience; that is, cleanses, purifies, sharpens, hones, and betters the conscience. The precious blood of Christ scrubs a man clean from all the grub and grime caused by eating fruit at the Poisonous Tree.

The word "*conscience*" means "with knowledge" and refers to that part of man's soul which is sensitive to right and wrong.

It is that part of the soul which senses danger. The conscience acts like a fire alarm notifying the man that he is in eternal jeopardy. When a man sins the buzzer goes off and sometimes stays on keeping the sensitive soul awake and agitated. The shadows have no power to silence the alarm, but the doing and dying of Christ can bring rest to the soul. One only needs to investigate Calvary and claim its benefits by faith.

The word "*perfect*" (*teleioo*) describes the *purifying effect* of the blood upon on the conscience when perceived by faith – His blood cleanses us from ALL sin (1 John 1:7).

***2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.***

The weakness of the Levitical System: (a) the offering of goats and lambs could not remove the knowledge of sin from the Jewish conscience. Annual ceremonies were a testimony to the imperfections of the O.T. sacrifices. If the temple offerings, bulls and goats, could remove sin from the worshippers' consciences, they would not have been offered year after year. Because Hebrews, being battered by guilt, had no sense of real pardon, they continually offered up these sacrifices to the LORD.

***3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.***

Instead of relieving the roaring of a guilty conscience, these sacrifices only caused the priests and the people to experience hyperthymesia[1] – the ability to remember sins with unfailing accuracy -- like flogging your self with a beat stick.

***4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.***

(b) Not only were the sacrifices ineffective at cleansing the conscience, it was impossible for these Levitical offerings to purify the sinner. At best, the sacrifices shadowed the reality of the cross.

***5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me:***

"Wherefore" (result or reason) – on account of the powerlessness of these offerings, God sent His Son in bodily form to do what Levitical sacrifices could not do -- to save and purify the man from sin.

"Sacrifice and offerings" represent two divisions of offerings -- the former of necessity, and the latter as an act of worship.

The verb "wouldst not" refers to the will and pleasures of the LORD God. The Father took no joy in those sacrifices except for the fact the bull and lamb offerings reflected in shadow-form the willingness of Christ to do the will of God in His body – the instrument for doing the Father's will; c.f. with Psalm 40:6-8 and Hebrews 9:25-28; 10:7.

***6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.***

(c) the sacrifices did not please God. In looking at the two offerings, (1) OT burnt offerings and (2) the living, obedient Christ, there is no comparison. Moreover, the Father had no pleasure in the death of lambs except for the fact they foreshadowed the obedience of the Son unto death satisfied the judicial claims of a holy God.

***7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.***

The "I" is direct reference to the Messiah-Son. Every promise, prophesy, and command of law was fulfilled in Christ to the delight of the Father. He is the end or fulfillment of the law (Romans 10:4).

***8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; 9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.***

(d) The purpose of OT sacrifices were a temporary -- a stop gap until Christ appeared in history to resolve man's sin issues. They were merely a shadow of the Son – a paving of the way for the Savior – an announcement of the Lamb's work at the cross. These shadows, to the shock of the Jews, were removed so men could study and grasp the efficacy of His blood shed at Calvary.

***10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.***

**First benefit of the cross:** The word "sanctified" (*hagiozo*) means "holy" and it is the opposite of "unclean." It is a perfect indicative announcing that His substitutionary, propitiatory work redeemed believers from sin and made them "holy" (clean) in His sight . . . by one act at the cross for the benefit of all believers.

Want to be “*holy*” in God’s sight? Embrace the Son by faith and claim the marvelous, day-to-day benefits of His sacrifice for your sins – a perfect offering that cleanses every stain and silences every alarm when grasped by faith.

***11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:***

(e) The ineffectiveness of temple sacrifices: Priests never sat down in the temple. They stood as a statement that redemption required continuous effort to satisfy the claims of Divine law and the cries of the conscience. The contrast between the Old Testament Levitical sacrifices and the one-time offering of Christ continues. The Spirit wants us to know it is an undisputable fact those animal sacrifices could never take away sins . . . but the sacrifice of our Lord takes away all sins, big and small, near or far, forever.

***12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;***

**Second benefit of the cross** -- acceptance. How do we know this? What is the proof? Fantastic claims demand proof with strict proof of claim.

Christ’s resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God in history (Acts 1) is proof of claim that God accepted Christ’s redemptive work at Calvary to satisfy man's debt.

***13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.***

**Third benefit of the cross** -- a guarantee of complete victory. Not only did Christ defeat the main enemies of man -- Satan, sin, and death at Calvary, His resurrection is proof that all enemies of righteousness will be put under His feet.

***14 For by one offering he hath perfected (telioo) for ever them that are sanctified.***

Fourth benefit of the cross -- perfection.

"*For*" introduces the main truth of this chapter. His redemption not only satisfies the claims of perfect justice, they also cleanse the conscience.

“*one offerings*” is set in contrast to the “*oftentimes*” offerings in verse 11. The Savior died for the sins of all men born and to be born; past sins and future sins. His work at Calvary perfects all who come to Him for salvation. He cleanses all men: big sinners and small sinners. His blood washes away sins of men and sins of women; ugly sins and comely sins; mammoth sins and peccadillos; scarlet sins and grey ones.

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The verb "***perfected***" is in the perfect tense indicating a past action with present results. Perfection (justification) is a fact to be enjoyed. The verb "sanctified" is a present tense participle indicating that practical holiness (sanctification) is still in the process of being accomplished in our lives.

***15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;***

**Fifth benefit of the cross** -- regeneration by the Holy Spirit as a result of the inaugurated covenant.

Christ not only cleanses sinners; he perfects believers by empowering them to do good and to serve Him with a clear conscience; that is, to obey His law and to keep His Word.

This blessing is not for all men, but it is available to those under the new covenant.

When a man believes he is saved from the penalty of sin and the power of sin. He is not saved "from law" but from the penalty of breaking the law -- not saved from law but to law -- not saved by law, but saved in order to keep the law.

Saying, "*I will put my laws into their hearts . . . and minds*" is the writer's way of discussing the effects of the new birth. His position is one as "justified;" but his condition is one of being born again with holy desires. When the Spirit regenerates the man, he not only receives power to keep the law, he receives a desire to keep the law. Though the believer may fail many times, he wants to do what is right and will constantly make decisions to live consistent with the will of God.

"*Putting law into their hearts*" means the law of God is engraved in the man so that doing righteousness becomes part of his character; that is, he now has the power and will to keep and obey God's law.

***17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.***

**Sixth benefit of the cross** -- that sins in the mind of God are consigned to oblivion -- a state of being buried or erased from history or consciousness.

So perfect is Christ's work at cross, it removes our sins from the mind of God.

I can remember my sins, but God can't; and, since God forgets my sins, I must leave the corpse in its coffin and not go digging it up.

In offering the OT sacrifices there is a remembrance of sins every year. When God looks at the blood of Christ, there is non-remembrance of our sins; that is, His blood effects God's forgetfulness. What a shower does for a filthy farmer coming in from the field after a day's work, the blood of Christ does for the soul.

***18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.***

**Seventh benefit of the cross** -- complete satisfaction of debt; hence, a man can live debt free in his life.

The word "*remission*" refers to being released from the debt of sin. Since the debt has been discharged, there are no more payments to make. If I sin, Christ need not come again and die again. But, I must claim the power of the blood by faith.

***19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus***

**Eight benefit of the cross** -- spiritual boldness to walk with God.

“*therefore*,” touches the application of eternal redemption.

The word "*boldness*" (parrhesia) refers "to freedom" and "courage" to enter into the holy place to fellowship with God. The word is translated "openly" in Mark 8:32; John 7:32; "plainly" in John 10:24; "freely speak" in Acts 2:29; "boldness" in Acts 4:13; and "confidence" in Acts 28:31.

This kindness is not a license to sin more, but a solemn reminder that though we are not debtors to justice, we are debtors to grace.

Out of debt, we have boldness to accept the invitation to come into His presence . . . a boldness not based on pride, but one based on assurance “His blood cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7; Hebrews 9).

There **are only two religions in the world**; *the religion of Cain and the religion of Abel; the religion of beans, broccoli, and beets; and, the religion of blood*. Christianity is a very bloody religion. Hebrews announces the cleansing power of blood that satisfies the Divine claims of holiness which perfects the conscience. Salvation is meant to be enjoyed. Moaning and groaning over personal failures is not what pleases the Lord. Let us enjoy the cleansing power of the blood by faith. The foundation of salvation which keeps us sane and from going insane due to the siren of guilt.

[1] *Hyper* = extreme longing or desire; and, enthymesis means “to ponder, consider, take to heart, or to weigh on one’s mind.

#### **Notes:**

*“It is not the absence of sin but the grieving over it which distinguishes the child of God from empty professors” — A.W. Pink*

## **THERE IS POWER IN THE BLOOD**

Have a troubled conscience? This verse is for you.

***1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light,***

This wonderful text has three important clauses.

The contingency word "*if*" introduces a 3rd class conditional clause with the subjunctive" -- maybe you do, but maybe you don't, but if you do, you will walk in the light.

***we have fellowship one with another,***

John did **not** say, "if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with God;" but, "*fellowship one with another.*"

Walking with God's people is primary evidence one is walking in the light. Instead of calling the pretenders "*liars*," John flips the coin on its edge to expose the false claims; that is, those claiming to walk with God must also walk happily with the flawed, fractured people of God. God's heart is with His people, and if professing Christians do not love God's people, they don't know God. If one claiming to know the Shepherd does not hang around the sheep, he is probably a wolf in sheep's clothing.

***and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.***

The verb "*cleanseth*" (*katarizo*) introduces the subject of sanctification, and not justification.

We get the word "catharsis" from this Greek stem. "Catharsis" is "a metaphor used by Aristotle in the Poetics to describe the effects of true tragedy on the spectator." The use is derived from the medical term *katharsis* (Greek: "purgation" or "purification"). Aristotle states that the purpose of tragedy is to arouse "terror and pity" and thereby effect the catharsis of these emotions" (Britannica).

The spirit uses the term "*catharsis*" to define the healing of lepers in Matthew 11:5.

The concern in 1 John is not being saved from the penalty of sin, but the power of sin and its haunting influence on the conscience. He is not discussing being "*redeemed*" by blood, but being "*cleansed*" and "*healed*" by blood – the *telos* or intended purpose of the blood. Even the best of saints sin and "feel" the ring, pop, and thump of guilt pounding away like kettledrums in the conscience. This text ministers to the conscience informing believing men that conscientiousness of the blood cleanses and qualifies them for moment by moment fellowship with the Father and the Son. Faith in the blood, therefore, silences the percussions of a troubled conscience (Hebrews 10:17).

*Rest, soul, rest in the sufficiency and efficiency of the blood of Christ which is working now, this moment, to cleanse your conscience.*

- Believing men are propitiated through His blood - Romans 3:25
- Believing men are justified by His blood - Romans 5:9
- Believing men are redeemed by His blood - Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, Hebrews 9:12, 1 Peter 1:18-19, Revelation 5:9
- Believing men are made near to God and His promises by His blood - Ephesians 2:13
- Believing men secure peace with God through His blood - Colossians 1:20
- Believing men obtain a clean conscience through His blood - Hebrews 9:12-14
- Believing men attain boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus - Hebrews 10:19
- Believing men are sanctified by His blood - Hebrews 13:12, 1 Peter 1:2
- Believing men are repaired and equipped to serve God by His blood - Hebrews 13:20-21
- Believing men are cleansed by His blood - 1 John 1:7
- Believing men are washed from their sins by the Blood of Christ - Revelation 1:5
- Believing men are made white in the blood of the Lamb - Revelation 7:14
- Believing men gain victory over Satan, the accuser of the brethren, by His blood - Revelation 12:11

In 1 John 1:7, the apostle is not occupied with the cross, but with the throne; not with the blood that purchases sinners, but the life-giving blood of Christ which purifies and sanctifies the saint. Blood in this

text has "the cleansing power of life" similar to Paul's statement in Romans 8:2 'the law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ makes me free from the law of sin and death.'

We are not only saved by his death from the penalty of sin, we are saved by his life from the power of sin (Romans 5:10).

When Zachariah gained insight into the Christ child he saw the hope that "*we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him **without fear***" (Luke 1:74).

**Q:** How can we serve Him without fear? The answer is in 1 John 1:7 and Hebrews 13:20-21).

In Hebrews we read, "***through the blood*** of the everlasting covenant, ***make you perfect*** (katartizo) ***in every good work*** to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight" (13:20-21). The word "***perfect***" (*katartizo - tisai*) (aorist optative - a wish) means "*to equip thoroughly*" **and** "*to repair*." It is translated "*perfectly joined together*" in 1 Corinthians 1:10; "*fully furnished*" or "*equipped*" in 2 Timothy 3:17; "*to mend*" *nets* in Matthew 4:21; "*to restore*" in Galatians 6:1; and "*to frame*" in Hebrews 11:3. In using the optative the apostle is expressing a wish that a believer's consideration of the blood will fully equip him to serve God.

Christ not only saves us through the power of His death unto justification; He saves us through the Power of His Risen Life unto sanctification. The One saving us through His death from the penalty of sin is the One now saving us through His life from the power of sin. He saves men from the condemnation of sin through faith in His death, and saves men from the domination of sin through faith in His Highly Exalted Life (Colossians 3:2).

A growing cleansing from the dominion and the power of sin is granted to us, if the life of Jesus Christ is breathing in our lives as we depend on His heart-beat operating within us by His Spirit.

*The sacrifice on the Cross is the basis of everything, but that sacrifice does not exhaust what Christ does for us. He died for our sins, and lives for our sanctifying. He died for us, He lives in us. Because He died, we are forgiven; because He lives, we are made pure (MacLaren).*

*That only way we can become free from the tyranny that dominates us, is having the life of Christ as the animating principle of our lives. When we depend on His life as the animating principle of our lives, the spirit of Jesus emancipates us from the power of sin and death (MacLaren).*

*The blood of Christ* at the cross redeems us from the penalty of sin unto justification (being declared righteous), but the quickening blood of Christ in His intercessory work at the right hand of God cleanses us from the power of sin unto sanctification (being made righteous).

The verb "*cleanseth*" is a present active indicative meaning His blood cleanses and keeps on purifying the saint. Believing men are not only redeemed by His blood, but cleansed day by day, moment by moment by His blood in order that men might be sanctified and qualified to walk in the light. Like silver is refined by heat, the heart is refined by continual reliance on the life of Christ as the animating power of one's life.

**Q:** If *the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from ALL sin*, what does that leave for baptism . . . or prayer . . . or penance . . . or saying the Rosary to cleanse?

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CONFESSION

Truth be known, many Christians are tied up in knots over their failures -- failures that prevent them from enjoying the Lord and His accomplishments for them at the cross and the throne.

1 John 1:9 is the remedy for the misery of those suffering from the megaphone of guilt.

***9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***

The word "*confess*" (homologeo) means *to agree with* -- part of the 3rd class conditional clause involving a subjunctive: *If we confess our sins, and few do, but if we do . . .*

The word "*just*" in this context means "faithful to His promises;" that is, God is a Promise-Keeper.

"*Walking in the light*" involves naming and confessing one's sins as the Spirit identifies them to him. Formal admission of sins to God is evidence the believer is walking in the light with God. Silence, denial, and concealment belong to the darkness.

Confession by itself does not sanitize the soul. Cleansing is ONLY accomplished by His sacrifice at the cross. There is no cleansing from sin apart from our Lord. *All the prayer in the world cannot cleanse the soul unless one has appropriated the cleansing power of His blood -- the currency of the spirit-world.*

But, cleansing from defilement for the Christian is achieved by confession. Christ need not die again! Confession brings the stained believer in contact with the cleansing power of the blood.

Light cleanses because the Truth reaches the man. As light dispels darkness, confession exposes sin so that the light of Christ's accomplishments can heal the man. Mothers used to say, "*Play in the sunshine*" because of the therapeutic nature of sunlight. As sunlight disinfects and heals wounds, walking in the light with an honest and open heart heals the sinner; that is confession enables the man to come into the sunlight where the blood of Christ can be applied to the soul (1:7).

Know that confession by itself does not cleanse the soul. There is no forgiveness apart from the doing and dying of Christ. Confession is the catalyst that enables the blood to be applied to our sins so we can maintain our walk with the Father and the Son moment by moment.

Know that confession to a priest does not cleanse the soul. The "*blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin.*" Confession of sins to God (and forsaking them) enables the Spirit to apply the cleansing power of the blood to the conscience (Proverbs 28:13).

God is faithful to purify the believer because of the doing and dying of Christ. Confession connects the Christian with the cure (blood) to effectively maintain the man in his walk "with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Because Christ is the believer's Representative at the throne of God, he can afford to admit guilt before God. Walking in the light means the man can be humble and acknowledge the worst about himself knowing that he will **not** be rejected. The one honestly confessing known sins in their full extent has the full assurance of free and full forgiveness necessary to walk in the light "with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."



Those walking in the light are given a promise. Confession, as opposed to suppression, enables the believer to claim God's forgiveness and enjoy the cleansing of the conscience from ALL unrighteousness. This confidence is not based on one's "victory" over sin or the strength of one's resistance to sin, **but upon God's character**: i.e. when we come into the light and confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse us because His Son shed his blood as a payment for our sins. Being so cleansed equips us to pray and serve Him.

*1 John 2:20 For if our heart condemn us, **God is greater than our heart**, and knoweth all things.*

*Luke 1:74- 75 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies **might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness BEFORE him**, all the days of our life.*

*1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but **perfect love casteth out fear**: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

Confession of sin is more like a "foot washing" than a total bath (See John 13) -- a necessary process to wash away the defilement that comes from rubbing shoulders with other sinners on this earth.

Confession must be accompanied by faith. Faith has to be aggressive after the conscience has knowledge of failure. For this reason the psalmist (Psalm 32) exhorts confessors **to triple down** on laying hold of the benefits of confession by denying one's feelings and believing the promises until one's feelings match the truth of God's promises. Joy over forgiveness is evidence of faith. These acts of obedience make the heart glad. Believe it, then achieve it.

King David, in his great confession said,

*Psalm 32:11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.*

## **63. THE BLESSING OF BEING SAVED BY HIS PRESENT, RISEN LIFE**

*Romans 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

Tired of defeat . . . of living a compromised life?

Christianity is more than a dream, an ethic, or religious-ritual. It involves an intimate relationship with the living God through His Son, risen from the dead, sitting at the right hand of the Father.

He is the content of the Christian life; the Water of Life; the Fuel in the tank; the Life-force working within the Christian heart through His Spirit. The One who calls us to holiness is the One Who supplies the power to be holy . . . to love . . . to suffer . . . and to serve.

**There is hope for a powerful, victorious life because our Lord sits at the right hand of God.**

*Colossians 3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God . . . Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know (Jeremiahs 33:3).*

We do not serve a dead Savior, but an alive, all-powerful, victorious Savior exalted to the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 1:3, 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22; Acts 7:55-56).

*"It is promised that the people who were long in sorrow, shall again be filled with joy. Where the Lord gives righteousness and peace, he will give all needful supplies for temporal wants; and all we have will be comforts, as sanctified by the word and by prayer." (Henry)*

What God promised to the people through the prophet, Jeremiah experienced in his own life (17:14ff).

**Jesus lived in total dependence on the Father.**

*John 5:19 Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.*

We must not only respond to the call to be saved from sin, but to walk by faith in dependence upon Him; to walk in the Spirit; and to walk in holiness and love. He does not save us, then abandon us *to serve Him in our own little, weak way*. The One who saves us by the death of His Son at Calvary also supplies to power to overcome sin now in this life by Christ "Who is our life" (Colossians 3:4).

**God works in the man to accomplish His will.**

*1 Thessalonians 5:24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it (sanctification).*

Like the Savior, "*we can do nothing!*" And, like the Son we are to live in total dependence on God to sanctify us.

The "it" in verse 24 refers back to God's call to be holy in verse 23: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

**God's power is available to us NOW.**

*Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

We are not abandoned to our own grit and power to do God's will. It is God who works in us to accomplish His good pleasure (obedience to His law - Romans 8:4).

His "*good pleasure*" refers to working out life's problems (salvation / sanctification) by the power of God as one seeks to obey His Word.

**Christ saves us now by his life.**

*Romans 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

***Romans 8:2 'the law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ makes me free from the law of sin and death.'***

Christ not only saves us through the power of His death unto justification; He saves us through the Power of His Risen Life unto sanctification. The One saving us through His death from the penalty of sin is the One now saving us through His life from the power of sin. He saves men from the condemnation of sin through faith in His death, and saves men from the domination of sin through faith in His Highly Exalted Life (Colossians 3:2).

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The blood of Christ at the cross redeems us from the penalty of sin unto justification, but the quickening blood of Christ in His intercessory work at the right hand of God cleanses us from the power of sin unto sanctification.

## **64. THE BLESSING OF TRANSFORMATION**

*1 Thessalonians 5:23 And the very God of peace **sanctify** you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are **changed** into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord..*

*Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye **transformed** by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

It is good news that believers are being transformed into the image of Christ; i.e. we are being sanctified and beautified as we engage Christ. No more shame and blame. The shame connected with our sins is overcome by regeneration and the transformation taking place in the soul by the Spirit. While it may be difficult to teach a dog new tricks, men are not dogs. There is no such thing as hopelessness when it comes to character. Former drunks, thieves, and liars can change for the better by the power of God. The Christian life is not static; it is dynamic. The Spirit is working on the inner man challenging the flesh and changing believers into the likeness of Christ. Transformation is the result of the dual action of Spirit and the believer's obedience to the Word of God.

The future is not the product of the past. It is not dependent on what happened to us when we were five or six or fourteen or twenty-five years old. Our future is determined by our faith in the gospel. The doctrine

of transformation means then end of hopelessness and helplessness. The worst of sinners can change and be like Christ.

Sanctification does not come about through psychotherapy, but through mental reflection on the gospel. Man's problem is not addiction, but sin; not low self-esteem, but not enough Christ-esteem. Men are not dysfunctional. The born-again Christian is a new creation and now functional. A Christian does not need a therapist, he needs dynamic fellowship with his Heavenly Father and God's people. Depression is not the result of a bad environment, but the failure to take sufficient comfort from God's promises. Though formerly deformed because of sin, a Christian can now be transformed by renewing his mind in the Word of God.

**Notice the meaning of the word "changed" in 2 Corinthians 3:18.** It comes from the Greek word *metamorphoo* (metamorfou, meqa). It means "to change," "to morph," "to vary." It is the same word used on the Mount of Transformation on the night the glory of God burst out of the Galilean carpenter and a spectrum of rainbowonic light glittered from our Lord's body to the delight and shock of the disciples (Matthew 17:1ff). This is the same word used to describe the transformation of a butterfly from its cocoon.

*Metamorphoo* in this text is a present, passive indicative verb. The *indicative mood* is the mood of reality. Christians can and do change. The *passive* means that Spirit is acting on the believer. Change is something that must be permitted and not resisted. The *present tense* is durative, meaning that believers are changing and keep on changing throughout life as they believe the gospel and appropriate its blessings by believing its message.

**Mark the "all."** All believers are being changed, not just ministers.

**Mark the means of change.** There is a divine element to transformation. This change does not come through therapy; or psychological journeys into one's past to discover a hurt and wounded child. It does not come through psychological analysis, shock therapy, or hypnosis. The word "beholding" in a mirror refers to one's focus; one's center of attention. It is also a middle verb implying that transformation happens when Christians adore their Lord; that is, looking at and appreciating His perfections results in being "changed into the same image." When Christians are Christ-centered instead of job-centered, they change. Unlike Moses who lost the shine of His glory, the Christian retains the glory -- as long as He is occupied with Christ. When a man reads and studies the life of Christ and sees his love, gentleness, holiness, righteousness, courage, suffering, patience and so many of His other virtues, the man changes "from glory to glory."

**Mark man's duty.** Romans 12: 2 exhorts the believer to resist being conformed<sup>44</sup> to the world, but to be transformed (*metamorphoo*) by the renewing of his mind. In this verse, the verb is an imperative; i.e. a command, "Be transformed!" The present tense implies a man should be constantly being changed. He is regenerated. But, now he must grow. Here the apostle calls for an effort to cooperate with the Spirit's work in a man's life. He is not admonishing the Christian to service in this verse, but to deliberation. He is not calling the Christian to get busy, but to occupy himself with Biblical truth. The soul is regenerated,

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<sup>44</sup> Resistance to conformity to the world does not infer isolation or separation from the community like monastics, but resistance to sensual, earthly values of a sinful society as a whole.

but the mind? That is another matter. It is the mind that is not “born again.” Thus, the Apostle calls believers to engage their little gray cells with the occupation of Christ; his work at Calvary and resulting justification. In so doing Christians will be transformed and know the will of God for their lives.

**Mark the positive view of the believer in Romans 12:1.** He appeals to the righteous soul, “*present your bodies as a living sacrifice*” unto God. The whole idea of the “carnal” man or the two natures of man is a distortion of Biblical teaching. The Christian is **not** a “mad dog” on the inside with a “white dog” begging for attention. The Christian man is a “*new creation*” “in Christ” and **not** some kind of Dr. Jekyll and Dr. Hyde. At the core of the Christian soul is a heart that beats for God and wants to please God. Yes, he has a body that is unregenerated; and, Yes, there are conflicts. But, the inner man is one that is “alive to God.” He needs only to reckon it to be so (Romans 6:11). *Reckoning* is the first command in the Book of Romans. Christians under the teaching of the “*two natures*” of man are psychologically hamstrung. Renew the mind! The “*carnal mind*” in Romans 8 refers to non-Christians, not a spiritual state of a nominal believer. Those in the “*Spirit*” are Christians who are “*not in the flesh*” according to Paul (Romans 8:9). When a non-Christian sins, he acts consistent with his fleshly nature; when a believer sins, he acts inconsistent with his spiritual nature. We are *new creatures* that can become more and more like Christ because “*His seed*” is within us dominating the inner life (1 John 3:9).

### **STAGES OF GROWTH IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

When a man is fully transformed, where will he be? If you truly adore Christ, where will you end up? What is the final stage of development? The Christian life is not static. It is progressive. If you love Him, the Father will not permit you to wander through life. He has a direction for your life: “*He ever lives to make intercession for them*” (Hebrews 7:25)

Matthew 5:1-13 introduces us to Beatitudes which present, I believe, stages of growth in the Christian life. They are as follows:

**Poor in Spirit:** Most men are rich in spirit. They have high self-esteem and do not feel the need for Christ. The day that one realizes he is poor in spirit, bankrupt in righteousness, and separated from Christ is the beginning of a blessing. Men must see they are sinners and cut off from God before they can even begin to appropriate the blessings of the gospel.

**Mourning:** The world teaches “blessed are the happy” and “happy are the party goers.” But, Jesus saw a blessing in mourning. Mourning is that spiritual state where one is sad, grieved, and stricken in spirit because of his wretched, sinful condition. It is a blessing to grieve over one’s spiritual poverty for it is evidence of the deep convicting work of the Spirit in the heart of the man.

**Meekness:** Man teaches, “Blessed are the strong and assertive.” But, Jesus taught blessed are the meek. In Roman days, a soothing ointment was called “*meek*.” Sailors used the term to describe a *gentle breeze*. A *broken and trained* horse was called “*meek*.” It is related to *humility*. Meekness is **not** weakness. It is the condition of mind which does **not** resist the convicting work of the Spirit; that is, it is the attitude that accepts the Spirit’s accusations regarding our sinfulness. The day a man says, “God you are right,” and “I am wrong,” is a day of blessing—progress in one’s spiritual development. Admitting one is a sinner is something the high minded person cannot and will not do.

**Hunger for righteousness:** The world lusts for pleasures, for fame, and for power. The number one concern in America is the economy. Men love to talk about how to make more money. There is “Money

Magazine” and daily talk shows on Money. But, Jesus said it was *a blessing when a man hungers for righteousness*; that is, *a desire to be right with God*. The desire of the soul to have a right relationship with Him results in justification of the sinner. Hunger for righteousness is the beginning of justification and regeneration, the day of salvation. What a blessing!

The next blessings are evidence that one has become a Christian.

**Merciful:** The world loves stories about retribution on enemies and the ability of men to inflict justice on their adversaries. The theme of many movies is about sweet revenge. But, after a man tastes the grace of God and his forgiveness. His soul is afire with thankfulness and gratitude. The saved soul cannot help but show kindness to others because he is the recipient of God's love and forgiveness. There is a stage in Christian progress wherein the believer is transformed from a bitter being into a kind and tender lover of souls.

**Purification:** Men and woman of the world want to experience everything. They want it all.

The man of God restricts his pleasures. This is not self-abdication but of being refined in life's trials. This stage is very difficult. It is the stage in Christian development wherein the believer feels like he is in the furnace of affliction, on the anvil being pounded out into something he is not sure he wants to become. This is the stage of the hard trials of life that refine the soul, unshackle the believer from habits of sin, and progressively work into the heart of the believer the very character of Christ. He has learned to trust Christ, but now he is being made trustworthy. This is the cleansing stage; the flowering of holiness. But, he must not resist the heat. He must learn to profit from his afflictions as God infuses steel into his soul.

**Peacemakers:** Modern man is at war with God's Law and with each other. The world, the church, and the family are crawling with angry, divided people. God's answer to hostilities is to offer men terms of peace based on the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through the gospel men can find peace with God. He does this through peacemakers. His peacemakers are gospel-men—men who have grown in Christ-like character and been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, He sends his trained into the arena of conflict to offer peace to warring souls. The peace offered is between God and men through the gospel . . . and sometimes these peacemakers can bring peace warring men.

**Persecuted:** Men believe there is blessing when everyone admires and honors them. Jesus taught the opposite. Blessed are those who are the target of hostility. The word "persecuted" means "to make run." This is a stage of life where the mature believer experiences opposition to His ministry. He is opposed, **not because he preaches the gospel**, but because he seeks to apply the ethical principles of the law to rotting segments of society. The blessing is not "persecution" but the maturity of soul that expresses faith and courage amid the conflict. It is the ability to stand when others are calling for retreat. It is the ability to “fight” when your feelings are shouting for “flight.” Though not specifically stated, the persecutors are often government agents. All the apostles died at the hands of the State officials.

**Slandered:** The world believes that fame and honor among men is an award to be achieved. No one likes to be ill spoken of especially when the accusations are false. Men are students of “How to Win Friends and Influence People.” Schools for prophets don't exist. Slander is the well-worn tool of politicians. Slander is effective in shaping public opinion. It need not be true . . . but if repeated enough negative images of opponents are etched on the soul. The gullible public will believe just about anything which the media spits out. However, Jesus informed His disciples that there is a special blessing when men/officials/officers defame your name. This is the ultimate stage of maturity. It is the character of soul

that is secure, persistent, and confident in the face of hostilities. The blessing is not in being insulted, but the confident spirit that endures contumely. Passing this course enables a man to stand with joy for a righteous cause while he is being slandered and maligned and misunderstood. Not an easy place to be!! If you mature in Bible knowledge, you will be standing confidently amid God's enemies for righteous causes while being maligned by men—disapprove by men but approved by God.

- The first stage is poor in spirit; the final stage is to be rich in spirit.
- In the first stage one is useless to God; in the final stage one is being used by Christ.
- In the first stage one is insecure in faith; in the final stage one is confident in his faith.
- The first stage begins with sadness of heart; the final stage produces joy in the heart.
- The first stage is one where a person is shaken, but the final stage the believer is unshaken by the “contradiction of sinners” against himself.

The first stage is a revelation about one's deficiencies of character; the final stage is about the flowering of Christ-like character in the midst of conflict.

In the first stage a man is a boneless, but in the final stage he is a brawny soldier for Christ. God is not seeking to create sugar and spice and everything nice, but salty men who sting and cleanse the sores of a decadent society.

What is the final stage for the cross-carrying Christian? If you have taken up the cross, God will work into your heart deep convictions about truth and righteousness. As you seek to apply the Word of Truth to a corrupt society and broken relationships, you will experience fierce opposition. It is not encouraging to be opposed, but it is a blessing to have convictions in the faith, to be courageous in the faith, and to be constant in the application of the faith when surrounded by adversaries.

When you mature and have the privilege of standing on the frontlines where Satan is attacking the truth, you are blessed. You will be in good company. Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, and Paul went from being poor in spirit to being rich in spirit. All faced imprisonment. All were targets of hostile, tyrannical states. All lost the favor of men because they were seeking the praise of God. All reflected Christ in their final hours of suffering.

## **65. THE BLESSING OF ELECTION**

*Romans 11:36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

*Job 11:7 Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?*

An Air Force Colonel in August 2012 became increasingly intolerant of Christian chaplains even requiring uniformed officers to remove all "Christian" bumper stickers from their private car. Col. Holden

went so far as to condemn officers for writing their personal Christian beliefs in private emails. Why did she do this? Col. Holden exposed her premise in her statement that there are "many roads to Texas:"

*If there are many roads to Texas...how is it possible there are not truly many roads to God...? How is it possible that any human can limit that Creator to only one road to understanding, loving, and worshipping Him...?*

*Does it make sense to say that only one religion offers the definitive road to God? I think not.*

*Religious tolerance...is critical for teamwork in the Air Force. But a deeper level is that of genuine respect — respect that others' roads to God are valid (Christianfighterpilot.com).*

**Holden** sees religion as "many roads going up the same mountain" and that all roads lead to the same God. But, her presumptions are many: The analogy assumes that all roads go up and not down; that the mountain is a nice round hill and not a steep cliff; that religion is a search for God, not God's search for man. When **C.S. Lewis** first heard the analogy he said it sounded like the "*mouse's search for the cat.*"

Man cannot search out God and find him -- kind of like the mouse seeking the cat. True religion is about God's search for man. This lesson is illustrated in the Tabernacle wherein God starts with the Ark and ends with the sacrifices; i.e. where man starts in his understanding of the Almighty. Can you imagine an Israelite saying I'm going to offer my one and only bull as a sacrifice in my search for God? This would be non-sense, yet is how men think of religion today.

*Christ is the fullness of the Godhead*; that is, He is the full and complete revelation of God (Colossians 2:9-10; Hebrews 1:1-3). Christ is the final and full revelation of God and anyone who claims he has an additional revelation from God insults the full and final revelation of God in Christ.

## DEFINITION OF ELECTION

Election is the eternal choice of God, who acts according to His own pleasure apart from any foreseen merit in the man, to choose out of the mass of humanity certain men and women to be recipients of his special grace so they would be voluntary participants in the benefits of Christ meritorious work on Calvary.

Simply put: Election is God's determination to make certain individuals willing to accept His salvation in Christ.

*1 Peter 1:3 To God's elect . . . who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood.*

## IMPORTANCE OF ELECTION

Theology is the most important study that a human being can ever undertake.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said:



*"It has been said by someone that 'the proper study of mankind is man.' I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father" Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 7 January 1855, New Park Street Chapel, London, England.*

*There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, "Behold I am wise." But when we come to this master science, finding that our plummet cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass's colt; and with solemn exclamation, "I am but of yesterday, and know nothing." No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God.... But while the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it. He who often thinks of God, will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe.... The most excellent study for expanding the soul, is the science of Christ, and Him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity.*

*And, whilst humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently consolatory. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrow? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead. It is to that subject that I invite you this morning.*

If natural science is concerned with the facts and laws of nature, theology is concerned with the facts and laws of the Bible (Hodge, 1992):

*The object of natural science is to arrange and systematize the facts of the external world and to ascertain the laws by which they are determined. The object of theology is to systematize the facts of the Bible and ascertain the principles or general truths those facts involve. We cannot construct a system of theology to suit our fancy any more than an astronomer can adjust the mechanism of the universe to suit his own pleasure. Illustration: Botany is a branch of science dealing with plant life. Picture a scene in which there is a beautiful profusion of plants and flowers and trees. A botanist will go and discover all the different species of trees and plants and flowers, systematize them, and present the facts about them. This is what theology does. Theology is "the discovery, systematizing and presentation of truths about God." (see: Charles Hodge, "Systematic Theology: The Method." pp. 21-29, in Readings in Christian Theology, Vol. I, Millard J. Erickson, editor).*

## **TWO APPROACHES TO THEOLOGY**

There are two approaches to theology: (a) one is a *God-centered approach* revolving around God and His revelation; and, (b) there is a *man-centered approach* orbiting around man. These two approaches are called the *Calvinism and Arminianism*. These are not studies about men, but about systems of thought. Both cannot be right, one of them is wrong.

Some people do not like the terms Calvinism and Arminianism. We need to understand that the "labels" are about the content of Scripture, not about the men's names assigned to these systems of thought. The term's Calvinism and Arminianism are merely hooks on the wall wherein we hang a picture. They are connected, but not the same. It's not the hook that is important as much as the painting being displayed. Calvinism identifies a body of thought. Arminianism is a body of thought.

### **DEFINITION OF CALVINISM**

*"A comprehensive theological system chiefly distinguished by its **view of God** and His relationship to man. The name of the system is derived from John Calvin's surname . . ." (The Five Points of Calvinism, p. 1).*

Calvin did not develop Calvinism nor systemize this theology, though he was a principle exponent of many of its thoughts and beliefs.

### **DEFINITION OF ARMINIANISM**

*Arminianism* is a theological system chiefly distinguished by its **view of man** . . . and his relationship to God. If you notice the trinity of "i's" in Arminianism you can quickly grasp its distinction from Calvinism because Arminianism is all about "I", "I", and "I". It bears the name of **Jacob Arminius**, NOT because he was the founder of the system. He was not!! But, he was an exponent of many of its tenants.

Arminianism began in the proud heart of fallen man, was espoused by Pelagius (390-418 AD), modified by Cassian (360-535 AD), defended by Erasmus (1466-1536 AD), defined by Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609 AD), popularized by Charles Wesley (1703-1791 AD), and applied by John Dewey to the public school system.

### **ORIGIN OF CALVINISM**

**Calvin was not the founder of Calvinism.** Calvin was born in July of 1509 and he died in May of 1564. If Calvin had never been born the doctrines of Calvinism would still be with us because they were known by Augustinianism in the 4th century and earlier as Paulinism because they were preached by the Apostle Paul. But, even before this there was the preaching of the OT prophets.

Calvinists do not see themselves as followers of John Calvin, but of Christians who study and preach the grand view of God as recorded in the Holy Scripture. Where Scripture is studied, Calvinists are among them. Where Scripture speaks, they speak. Where Scripture is silent, Calvinists are silent. True Calvinists are exegetes and expositors of the Word of God. This is why most books on theology are written by Calvinists. Thus, Calvin is not the founder, originator, or leader of Calvinists. He simply systematized theology from his own studies of Scripture. Calvin did not invent a new teaching any more than Columbus invented America or a farmer invents corn.

**The chief doctrine of Calvinism is not predestination.** In the first Confession of Faith in 1537, predestination is barely mentioned. The first Institutes were written by John Calvin and were the first

systematic theology ever published and the doctrine is there but only scantily. But, it is in his latter editions after the grace of God was attacked that we find the doctrine of predestination enlarged upon. The emphasis in Calvinism is upon God, not upon man and his election. Calvin worked from a position of Paul: For "of him" (Originator) and "through him" (Executor) and "to him" (Beneficiary) are "all things." Calvinism is all about God and His attributes, His creation, and His work in Christ at Calvary. Henry Meter said Calvinism is a system of theology where God is most highly glorified and man most deeply abased.

**Calvinism is not restricted to the Five Points of Calvinism.** Calvinism is larger than this. It has an unlimited number of points: sovereignty, grace, love, justice, government, salvation, faith . . . etc. Because Calvinism speaks where the Bible speaks. The cries during the Reformation were "Sola Scriptura" and "Total Scriptura" (Scriptures are full and complete) and Sola Christos (the main topic of Scripture). In the subject of soteriology there are five points as found in Romans 8:28ff).

**Calvin is not the author of the five points** because these did not come into existence until 1619. Calvin died in 1564. So, who was the originator of the acronym **TULIP**?

### **TULIP**

- **Total Depravity** describes the pervasive influence of sin upon the total man; that is, man in incapable of coming to Christ without a special work of grace in his soul (regeneration). God must save the man because sin has rendered him unable to seek God in truth.
- **Unconditional Election:** There is nothing in man that motivates grace. The reason for salvation rests solely in the heart of God. "You have not chosen me; I have chosen you." God elects; God chooses; and God's grace enables the man to believe. See Nicodemus, the woman at the well, and the conversion of Paul.
- **Limited Atonement:** Christ's death was intended to atone for the sins of God's elect and not for all of Adam's race; that the Lord's redemptive work on the cross was intended to secure the salvation of those whom God had chosen for salvation before the foundation of the world. While the benefits of Christ's death are available to all they are only effective for the elect.
- **Irresistible Grace** is God's special infallible work, calling and bringing to salvation those and those alone whom He has chosen for salvation before the foundation of the world, and who were previously redeemed through His Son's atoning work at Calvary.
- **Perseverance of the Saints:** God's people are eternally secure; that God's grace not only saves the man but preserves the man. This belief asserts that those chosen for salvation will not ultimately fall away from their faith because the power of God shrouds the man in a cloak of grace to not only believe but to obey Him unto salvation.

How did these come into existence?

### **ORIGIN OF ARMINIANISM**

The doctrines of Arminianism were defined by **Jacob Arminius** (1560-1609). He was only four years old when Calvin died. They never met.

**Arminius** is not the founder of Arminianism. Arminianism began with Cain.

*As there was nothing new in substance in the Calvinism of Calvin, so there was nothing new in the Arminianism of Arminius;— facts, however, which do not in the least detract from the merits of Calvin as a most powerful promoter of scriptural truth or from the demerits of Arminius as an influential disseminator of anti-scriptural error. The doctrines of Arminius can be traced back as far as the time of **Clemens Alexandrinus**, and seem to have been held by many of the fathers of the third and fourth centuries, having been diffused in the church through the corrupting influence of pagan philosophy. **Pelagius and his followers**, in the fifth century, were as decidedly opposed to Calvinism as Arminius was, though they deviated much further from sound doctrine than he did. The system of theology which has generally prevailed in the Church of Rome was substantially very much the same as that taught by Arminius, with this difference in favour of the Church of Rome, that the Council of Trent at least left the Romanists at liberty to profess, if they chose, a larger amount of scriptural truth, upon some important points than the Arminian creed, even in its most evangelical form, admits of,—a truth strikingly confirmed by the fact, that every Arminian would have rejected the five propositions of Jansenius, which formed the ground of the Jansenistic controversy, and would have concurred in the condemnation which the Pope, through the influence of the Jesuits, pronounced upon them. (CHAPTER XXV. THE ARMINIAN CONTROVERSY Source: Chapter 25 in the The Works of William Cunningham, D.D. Vol. 3; Historical Theology, Vol 2. pages 383-525.) (Wikipedia).*

**Arminius** based his doctrines on the philosophy of Pelagius and Casius.

**Pelagianism** is the belief that original sin did not taint human nature and that mortal will is still capable of choosing good or evil without special Divine aid. This is still sometimes called Limited Depravity. Thus, in contrast to 1 Corinthians 15:19-22 (especially verse 22), Adam's sin was "to set a bad example" for his progeny, but his actions did not have the other consequences imputed to original sin. Pelagianism views the role of Jesus as "setting a good example" for the rest of humanity (thus counteracting Adam's bad example) as well as providing an atonement for our sins. In short, humanity has full control, and thus full responsibility, for obeying the Gospel in addition to full responsibility for every sin (the latter insisted upon by both proponents and opponents of Pelagianism). According to Pelagian doctrine, because humans are sinners by choice, they are therefore criminals who need the atonement of Jesus Christ. Sinners are not victims, they are criminals who need pardon.

#### **SEVEN POINTS OF PELAGIUS (Dallas Eaton Baptist Board)**

1. Adam was created mortal, so that he would have died even if he had not sinned.
2. Adam's sin injured himself and not the whole human race.
3. Newborn infants are in the same condition as Adam before the fall. (Note today's Education where educators think everyman comes into this world as a blank tablet.)
4. The whole human race neither dies on account of Adam's sin, nor rises on account of Christ's resurrection.

5. Infants, even though not baptized, attain eternal life.
6. The law is as good a means to salvation as the gospel.
7. Even before Christ, some men lived who did not commit sin. (These men were Abel, Enoch, Joseph, Job, and among the heathen, Socrates, Aristides and Numa.)

### **SEMI-PELAGIANISM**

**Augustine** so devastated Pelagius that no one wanted to identify with him. But, a new teaching emerged that natural man can achieve righteousness with the Spirit's assistance. Pelagius was defeated and exposed as a heretic. Cassian came along and synthesized Augustine and Pelagius into what we know as Semi-Pelagian Theology.

John Cassian:

*John Cassian was a contemporary of St. Augustine in Gaul (modern France). A Semi-Pelagian monk and founder of many monasteries, he wrote The Institutes and Conferences and slightly modified Pelagius's teachings. "The Semi-Pelagian doctrine taught by John Cassian (d. 440) admits that divine grace (assistance) is necessary to enable a sinner to return unto God and live, **yet holds that, from the nature of the human will, man may first spontaneously, of himself, desire and attempt to choose and obey God.** They deny the necessity of prevenient but admit the necessity of cooperative grace and conceive regeneration as the product of this cooperative grace." A.A. Hodge*

**B.B. Warfield** (1851-1921), the great Princeton Reformed Professor, stated:

*"But Pelagianism did not so die as not to leave a legacy behind it. "Remainders of Pelagianism" soon showed themselves in Southern Gaul, where a body of monastic leaders attempted to find a **middle ground** on which they could stand, by allowing the Augustineian **doctrine of assisting grace**, but retaining the Pelagian conception of our **self-determination** to good. We first hear of them in 428, through letters from two laymen, Prosper and Hilary, to Augustine, as men who accepted original sin and the necessity of grace, but asserted that men began their turning to God, and God helped their beginning. They taught that all men are sinners, and that they derive their sin from Adam; that they can by no means save themselves, but need God's assisting grace; and that this grace is gratuitous in the sense that men cannot really deserve it, and yet that it is **not irresistible**, nor given always without the occasion of its gift having been determined by men's attitude towards God; so that, though not given on account of the merits of men, it is given according to those merits, actual or foreseen. The leader of this new movement was John Cassian, a **pupil of Chrysostom** (to whom he attributed all that was good in his life and will), and the fountain-head of Gallic monasticism; and its chief champion at a somewhat later day was Faustus of Rhegium (Riez)."*

*When a preacher says God has done all he can for you, you must take the first step, this is Pelagianism. This is Cassianism: You must be sincere and genuine and do all you can to move toward God, then God is OBLIGATED to help you! Cassianism starts with men, advances by man, and ends up glorifying man! If God assist in man's salvation, it is still MAN'S SALVATION! Man is not dead. He just needs a little help.*

## ARMINIAN REMONSTRANCE OF 1610

In 1610, one year after the death of Arminius, his followers objected to the Belgian Confession of Faith in 1561 (Reformed) and wanted Holland to adopt the *Arminian position of Arminius*. Since they were against Calvin, and Reformed theology, they published a *Remonstrance*.

(<http://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/belgic-confession>).

Dutch Arminianism was originally articulated in **the Remonstrance (1610)**, a theological statement signed by forty-five ministers and submitted to the States-General of the Netherlands.

The **Synod of Dort** (1618–19) was called by the States General to consider the Five Articles of Remonstrance. They asserted that:

- Man is not helpless. Each man can choose whether he wants to go to heaven -- a denial of total depravity of man. Man is never so corrupted, he cannot find salvation.
- God chose the elect based on his foreknowledge. Election based on man's choice, not upon God's choice. Election (and condemnation on the Day of Judgment) was conditioned by the rational faith or nonfaith of man; i.e. man was not helpless in aiding his own salvation. Election was based on man's choice not God's will.
- The atonement, while qualitatively adequate for all men, is efficacious only for the man of faith; Christ died for everyone but the person must choose to accept salvation. A teaching of universal atonement but a denial of effectual atonement.
- Grace is resistible; i.e. man can resist Almighty God. Man is stronger than God.
- Believers are able to resist sin but are not beyond the possibility of falling from grace. A true regenerate believer can lose his faith and suffer eternal punishment.

## SYNOD OF DORT

Since the **Armenians** wanted the *Dutch Reformed Church* to adopt these articles for their standard of faith. They were demanding that **the Scripture must be interpreted to teach** the following:

- (a) That man is never so corrupted by sin that he cannot believe the gospel when it is placed before him; and,
- (b) man is never so controlled by God that he cannot reject the gospel; and,
- (c) God's election of men is prompted by his knowledge that men will believe the gospel based on their own willing accord (this is ratification, not election); and,
- (d) Christ did not die exclusively for the elect but all men in order to create a possibility for all men to be saved; and,
- (e) it is the duty of believers to keep themselves in the state of grace by keeping up their faith or they will be lost.

The church, therefore, called for a national senate to discuss the Remonstrance of which forty-six ministers had signed. They met in November 1618 which was called **the Senate of Dort**. It consisted of eighty-four members and eighteen secular commissioners. Out of the 84 scholars, 58 were Dutch; the others were foreigners from England and Europe. They conducted 154 sessions and concluded in May 9th, 1619. The first official business was the taking of the oath:

*I promise before God, in whom I believe, and whom I worship, as being present in this place, and as being the Searcher of all hearts, that during the course of the proceedings of this Synod, which will examine and decide not only the five points and all the differences resulting from them but also any other doctrine, I will use no human writing, **but only the word of God**, which is an **infallible rule of faith**. And during all these discussions, I will only aim at the glory of God, the peace of the Church, and especially the preservation of the purity of doctrine. So help me, my Savior, Jesus Christ! I beseech him to assist me by his Holy Spirit! (Klooster 57) (Spindleworks.com).*

The goal was to examine the five points the Armenians had presented. Only the Scripture could be used as authority. Simon Episcopus, a student of Arminius, wanted to speak. The Armenians chose officers, intending to present themselves as a kind of counter-synod. They would deal with Synod as a party in the controversy, after which the government, with the advice of the foreign delegates, would give its verdict.

*Their main line of defense* would be to attack the Contra-Remonstrants as blasphemous fanatics, concentrating on the supralapsarian<sup>45</sup> ideas of Gomarus (*ad hominem* reasoning). But, Episcopus wanted to begin with a refutation of the doctrines of Calvin in hope of prejudicing the entire assembly. But, the assembly demanded Episcopus give Scriptural support in favor of Arminian opinions. *The Armenians refused*. The Armenians refused to answer questions, refused to submit studies, refused to use Scripture, refused to submit copies of their positions, and then denied authority of the synod. The synod then asked them to submit their objections to the Belgian Confession *in writing*. *They refused*. Even when asked about the Remonstrance of 1610, they all remained silent. In January 14, they refused to submit to the authority of the Synod and remained silent. The leader of the Synod arose and spoke and said the foreign delegates of this assembly are of the opinion that you are unworthy to appear before this synod. With an exhortation reflecting on the gentleness of the assembly and the stubbornness of the Armenians, the assembly let the Armenians go.

*The foreign delegates are now of the opinion that you are unworthy to appear before Synod. You have refused to acknowledge it as your lawful judge and regarded it as an opposing party: you have tried in everything to have your own way; you have despised the decision of Synod and of the political commissioners; you refused to answer questions; you declared the credentials to be invalid. Synod has treated you with gentleness, but you have been lying from beginning to end, as one of the foreign theologians remarked. With this eulogy we will let you go. God will keep his word and he will bless the Synod. In order that we will not be delayed any longer, you will be sent out. Depart: Go! (Faber et al. 35) (spindleworks.com).*

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<sup>45</sup> There was a difference of opinion between the infra-lapsarian and the supra-lapsarian members of Synod. The point at issue was the question: "Who is the object of election?" The Armenians taught the believer was making faith the ground for election. All members of Synod rejected this. Infralapsarians, many of them foreign theologians, regarded fallen man as the object of God's election or reprobation.

The chairs and tables of the Armenians were put away. The Synod now began to examine their opinions from available writings, *concentrating on the Five Articles of the Remonstrance of 1610*. The reading of the various judgments of the eighteen committees concerning these Five Articles took place from March 7 to 21 and from March 25 to April 16. The Canons were formulated in ninety-three separate articles. These were signed by all the delegates on April 23, 1619, and solemnly promulgated in the Great Church on May 6 before a large congregation. Three days later, after six months of deliberation, the foreign divines departed, leaving the Dutch members to convene for another twenty-six sessions to deal with further national matters (Spindleworks.com)<sup>46</sup>.

The Synod then took the **five points**, studied them, and *then refuted them with the Word of God*. This is how they came up with the five points, **TULIP** . . . considering this was developed long after Calvin was dead.

**DeWitt** is adamant in his judgment of Arminius and his successors:

*Arminius and his successors were oath breakers; and to avoid the consequences of this offence, they in effect withdrew themselves from the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts, while claiming to continue as faithful members of the Church, and placed themselves under the protection of the secular power, (p. 10). He goes on to say that a man is rarely honest enough to withdraw himself, if his views become incompatible with the confessions of the church, but instead attempts, "by means of a strange line of casuistical reasoning," to convert the church to his own understanding of the truth (deWitt.10). (The Doctrines of Grace and the Canons of Dordrecht, p. 28).*

**It is the same today.** Instead of seeking the truth, people want you to adopt their views regardless if they represent Scripture or not. In 1619, if you were an Arminian, you were a heretic. In our day, if you are a Calvinist, you are heretic. Arminianism is now the standard doctrine taught in the church and in government schools.

Spurgeon once said,

*It is often said that the doctrines we believe have a tendency to lead us to sin. I have heard it asserted most positively, that those high doctrines which we love, and which we find in the Scriptures, are licentious ones. I do not know who will have the hardihood to make that assertion, when they consider that the holiest of men have been believers in them. I ask the man who dares to say that Calvinism is a licentious religion, what he thinks of the character of Augustine, or Calvin, or Whitefield, who in successive ages were the great exponents of the system of grace; or what will he say of the Puritans, whose works are full of them? Had a man been an Arminian in those days, he would have been accounted the vilest heretic*

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<sup>46</sup> The Synod of Dort has been labeled the "persecuting Synod." It is quite true that two hundred Remonstrant ministers were deposed from their office. Of these, a total of eighty were banished, nearly seventy agreed to be silenced and refrain from their ministry, and forty, upon conforming to the decisions of Synod, were restored to their office. It is also true that the political leaders of the Remonstrants were arrested. Van Oldenbarnevelt, declared guilty of treason, was beheaded on May 14, 1619. This prompted the grim joke from Diodati, the delegate from Geneva, that "the Canons of Dort had shot off the Advocate's head" (Dewar 115). But, the error of those who advocated and practiced what would now be considered persecution was a general error of the age.



*breathing, but now we are looked upon as the heretics, and they as the orthodox.*  
(<http://www.spurgeon.org/calvinis.htm>).

**A trite observation:** "The Calvinists emphasize the Sovereignty of God and Armenians emphasize the Freewill of man." Hogwash! Calvinists teach the responsibility of man also. The difference **is not one of emphasis**, but one of content. Either God saves man or man saves himself. Either salvation is by God or salvation is by man! When an Arminian teaches on justification it ends up being salvation by works.

*The gospel is Calvinism.* We can't preach the gospel unless we preach Calvinism because **Calvinism is the gospel!** Unless we preach the sinfulness of man and the glorious grace of God to send his Son to die for sinners, we aren't preaching the gospel.

**Spurgeon** declared,

*I do not believe we can preach the gospel, if we do not preach justification by faith, without works; nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel, unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having once believed in Jesus. Such a gospel I abhor.*

*"If ever it should come to pass,  
That sheep of Christ might fall away,  
My fickle, feeble soul, alas!  
Would fall a thousand times a day."*

*If one dear saint of God had perished, so might all; if one of the covenant ones be lost, so may all be; and then there is no gospel promise true, but the Bible is a lie, and there is nothing in it worth my acceptance. I will be an infidel at once when I can believe that a saint of God can ever fall finally. If God hath loved me once, then He will love me forever.*

**Arminianism is another gospel of Christ**, and it is a heresy (Titus 3:9). Because it is subtle, plausible, and popular, it undermines and supplants the gospel, the fall of man and the sovereignty of the LORD God.

#### **FOUR APPROACHES TO FREE WILL AND SOVEREIGNTY**

- God ordains all things (Feinberg); thus, man's will is limited. God ordains, therefore, He knows. Without violating man's will, God orders every detail in the universe.
- God knows all things, but does not force His will on men (Geisler). True love is persuasive, but never coercive.
- God is sovereign, but limits his powers so creatures can be free (Reichenbach). He does not choose to consistently violate natural law lest the world become chaotic.
- Man is truly free: thus, God's knowledge is limited and dependent on man's actions (Pinnock). God is independent of His universe, but He does not determine every detail in history.

- Stockton: The term “free will” is not used in Scripture; that is, it is not a Biblical doctrine. The only person who was truly free was Adam before the fall. To believe in free will one must practice eisegesis and not exegesis. We are not saying man does not have to believe; but, we are saying that God is the One who gives grace enabling a man to come to Christ.

## **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT ELECTION**

### **Election is a theological term.**

It is drawn from some six passage in the King James Version where the word itself appears. Another seventeen passages contain the word *elect*. It means “choice.” The word *elect*, *choose*, or *chosen* are the same word. You can see this in 1 Peter 2:4, 6, 9.

Ultimately, ***election is a revelation*** regarding the intention of God's will in human affairs. Terms like “*determinate counsel*” (Acts 2:23), “*mystery of his will*,” “*His good pleasure*” (Ephesians 1:9), and “*the counsel of His will*” (Ephesians 1:11) reveals that God acted to bring about personal salvation in time to individuals that He elected in eternity past.

His will is free, under no control, acting according to His good pleasure apart from and without influence of another being. What happens in time was determined in the counsel of the Godhead in eternity. If this were not so, then God would not be sovereign and His knowledge would be limited and incomplete. He would be surprised, ever learning, and ever wondering at man's behavior. He would be a judicious responder instead of the gracious initiator of our salvation.

- His will is free (Isaiah 40:13, 14).
- His will is absolute and sovereign (Isaiah 46:10).
- His will is guided by God's wisdom (Psalm 104:24).
- His will is eternal and final (2 Timothy 1:9).

### **Election presupposes a Biblical view of man's sinfulness.**

***Romans 3:11, 23 There is none that seeketh after God. . . there is none who does good, not even one . . . for all have sinned (aorist) and fall short (present) of the glory of God.***

The Presbyterian are correct on the doctrine of Election. Man is fallen and cannot save himself. But, because God is sovereign, he chooses some to be saved and enables his elect to believe in Christ.

Man is fallen and enslaved to sin. Like a man in chains, he cannot free himself (Romans 6:17). The sinner is like a leper who defiles everything he touches, and who must be healed by another (Leviticus 14:1-2). This is called the doctrine of “*total depravity*.”

*The doctrine of total depravity* is a biblical doctrine (Romans 3:10-19). It means that man is born a sinner; that he is corrupt, and in need of redemption. However, if thinkers believe that the concept of total depravity implies that man is thoroughly wicked or that man is “garbage,” then *we should object*. While man is a sinner, he is **not** “trash” for the following reasons.

*First*, though man is as bad off as he can be, he is not as bad as could be. He is condemned (John 3:18), but he is not beyond conciliation. He is helpless to save himself, but he is not hopeless of being saved by God Himself.

*Second*, Christ did not die for “trash,” he died for sinners. A debt was demanded, and a price was paid. Men are saved by the precious blood of Christ, and his blood was not shed for swine.

*Third*, if man is “garbage” then human life has no value. God’s investment in mankind through His Son would have to be deemed a bad investment. What kind of person buys trash? Man can do evil, but he is restrained from being as wicked as he can be (Psalm 76:10).

*Fourth*, Christ taught that man was made in the image of God. He is not an amoeba crawling out of some primeval swamp. He is flawed and fractured, but not without value (Luke 10:32).

### **Election is necessary because of universal condemnation.**

The truth is not that man will be condemned, but that all who do not believe in God's Son are condemned right now:

***John 3:18 Whoever does not believe is condemned already (h;dh ke,kritai -- perfect, passive).***

Election is like a painted mural showing that all humanity is headed towards the brink of eternity. God's sovereign hand reaches down in grace to save some and make them His own. I. God unconditionally elects some for salvation because it ensures His glory. To say that man has the power to believe and choose salvation apart from the regenerating work of God is to make man a god, to touch the ark, and to rob him of His glory.

Is God unjust because He saves some and not others? Understanding election properly will not cause us to question His justice; rather, it will release us to praise Him for his marvelous grace. Election is a family secret to be enjoyed, not to fight a war over.

### **Election is necessary because man is dead.**

***Ephesians 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins***

Man is not wounded; and, he is not on life support. He is dead to God; that is, his soul-corpse cannot seek God, respond to God, or reason his way to faith. God has to bring the man to life . . . and by His grace he does. Jesus came to give men life and to regenerate the soul of man. Today, there are two kinds of men in this world: those who are dead to God and the elect who are alive to God.

### **Election is an issue of grace and not a question of justice.**

***Romans 9:14 Is God unjust? Not at all!" says Paul.***

God is supreme. He is not subject to a set of laws outside Himself. He is the standard of all that is good. Whatever He does is right and just. He does not need to submit to man's narrow and twisted view of righteousness. He is righteous. The Creator owes nothing to the creature. He is **not** a debtor to man. Election is **not** an issue of justice. If justice were the issue, all would go to hell now! No sinner deserves heaven, but heaven will be full of sinners -- sinners saved by grace.

Grace is the issue. Grace is the cause of salvation. Grace motivates election. Grace produces good works and makes men better. It relieves the conscience and releases confidence in the soul (Ephesians 2:8-10).

**Election is related to God's omniscience.**

He knows everything: things present, things past, things future. He is perfectly acquainted with every fact of our lives. Election is not God discovering man's response to the wonderful message of the Gospel, but God decreeing that response before the foundation of the world. It is not that God foresaw that certain ones would respond and therefore He predestinated them unto salvation. This would make God's decrees rest on what He discovered in the person, rather than upon His own grace. It would make God the Responder to "good" in man, rather than man the responder to goodness in Christ. He has "bound all men over to disobedience so that He may have mercy on them all" (Psalm 139:1-6; Ezekiel 11:5; Psalm 103:14; John 21:17; Daniel 2:22; Hebrews 4:13; Romans 11:32).

## **ELECTION AND FOREKNOWLEDGE**

***Romans 8:28-30 . . . who have been called by his purpose. For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son . . . And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.***

**First**, foreknowledge is often misunderstood. It is not a mere perception of future events. It does not mean that God just knows beforehand what He is going to do or that it is merely associated with His prescience. It is associated with His purpose, His will, and His determination (Romans 8:28). Because He purposes to save some and not others, He is said to "foreknow." *Foreknowledge does not cause election. HIS PURPOSE causes election and as a result God knows:* "He foreknows because he elects" (Pink, First Printing 1930, p 24.).

**Second**, foreknowledge is not associated with events, though He knows future events. It is associated with foreknowing people. It is not "what" He foreknew, but "whom" He "foreknew." He chose people, not their actions (Romans 11:2). Because He elected who will be saved, He calls them into His kingdom and then gives them the grace to respond. Election is not about God knowing who will respond to Him by faith, but God electing some to come to faith in the course of life.

If it were true that God had elected certain ones to be saved because in due time they would believe, then that would *make believing a meritorious act*, and in that event the saved sinner would have ground for boasting, something which Scripture emphatically denies (Pink, p 25.) God elects without any cause in the creature. The cause is His purpose; foreknowledge is consequential attribute connected with election (2 Timothy 1:9).

In relation to Jacob and Esau (Romans 9:9-14), both were dead spiritually, but God chose Jacob to be His own possession, His object of love and protection, before either boy was born . . . before either one had done good or evil. The theological truth the apostle advances is that salvation is a matter of election and grace, not human choice and faithfulness. Further, God did not elect Esau to condemnation; He elected Jacob to salvation.

The Lord chose Jacob – not because Jacob was good, but because God is good. While there are reasons to hate Esau, God hated the man before he was even born (Romans 9:13). Moreover, the emphasis in this passage is not upon the rejection of Esau, but the love and grace of the Lord to choose some for salvation

*Romans 9:15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*

**Election is unmerited by the elect.**

*John 1:16 "You did not choose me, but I chose you . . . "*

*Ephesians 2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

As a man cannot choose his parents or the day of his birth, he can't choose to be part of the elect or to be born again.

There is no cause in the "*chosen*" why He would be part of the "*elect*." The doctrine of election states that God has sovereignly chosen those who will be saved in Christ. He's done this not because of any goodness or foreseen faith in them, but purely because he loves them.

The Biblical mind sees that God chooses men to be saved, and because He chooses them, He works to save them. The Arminian mind mistakenly believes that God knows those people who will respond to Him and then elects them to be saved.

It is not because man is good, or repentant, or believing that God chooses a person for salvation. All cause is found in the goodness and grace and purpose of God. God loves because He is love, not because we are lovely. Man is called to believe, to exercise faith in Christ, but faith is not a virtue in man, it is a gift (Ephesians 2:8-9). The ability to believe is an act of grace: "*which had believed through grace*" (Acts 18:27). Even repentance is graciously bestowed (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

Election is an issue in the mind of God that has been shared for the enjoyment of his children. It has been rightly called "*the family secret*." It is not a doctrine that is to be preached to the unsaved, but a doctrine to be shared in the church. It gives hope and assurance to weary saints.

Election does not disclaim the responsibility to believe or to obey. Though elect, the individual must still choose to believe and obey. God commands all people everywhere to repent . . . and, the elect are enabled by the Spirit to obey the gospel call (Acts 17:30).

The belief in election does not imply double election. That is, the "lost" individual is never said to be elected to damnation or hell. If a man goes to hell, it will not be because God elected him to go to hell, but because he is fallen and consents to go there without God. A man in heaven, though elect, will not be there because he was manipulated, but because he chose to be there.

God's election of a particular person does not mean the rejection of another particular person. We do not know who is elect and who is not. The elect are known to God, not to man. We can only guess and assume. At best, we discover who is elect by a regenerated life.

**Election is unconditional.**

Election is unconditional in the sense there is no condition in man that motivates God to elect him. It does **not** mean that an individual can claim to be God's elect and continue in a life of disobedience. Being elect carries responsibility. If a man claims to be an elected person, he should be living on the elected path.

*1 Thessalonians 1:4 Brothers loved by God, we know that the has chosen you because...you became imitators of us and the Lord.*

The elect are secure in salvation, but they are not so secure that they can indulge in any sinful delight of their own fancy. License to sin is not a product of a healthy understanding of election. Those who continue in a life of self-will and rebellion have no right to claim that they are elect, secure, or saved. They are deceived, and they need to be enlightened (1 John 2:3-9). Those who are truly elect will persevere to the end. They will live a holy life. They may stumble, but they get back up. The un-elect stay down. The elect may mistakes or even sin, but they will not continue in their sin or continually sin. Paul could say, "*of such were some of you*" (1 Corinthians 6:6-12).

The Apostle John said, "*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*" (1 John 3:9). The Greek verb for "*keeps on sinning*" (poiei) is a *present tense* verb. That is, the true believer will not keep on continually sinning after he is born again. There is something effective about regeneration. True believers make a break from habitual sin. When a man believes, the power of sin is broken. However, it does not mean that a believer loses his capacity to sin or never sins again. Otherwise, John would have said, "No one who lives in Him has not sinned." Such a belief would drive us to despair.

### **CONCERNS REGARDING ELECTION**

Everyone has difficulty reconciling election and freewill. Someone said, "If we deny it, we can lose our souls; if we try to understand it, we can lose our minds."

Holding to the doctrine of election demands spiritual maturity.

Maturity is the ability to hold two polar concepts in juxtaposition to each other without reconciliation and without contradiction. Do you believe in cold or hot? Night or day? North or south? Of course, you believe in each polar concept. It is possible and necessary to believe in election as well as "*whosoever will come after me*" (Mark 8:34).

**The primary subject of election is Christ and Israel** (Isaiah 42:1; Luke 9:35; 22:22; 23:35; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 13:27; Isaiah 45:4). *If Christians are the elect, it is because they are identified with Christ.* If a person is in Christ, then he is the elect -- a member of the true Israel of God (Romans 9:6; Ephesians 2:13ff).

**The doctrine of election in Ephesians is more about groups (h`ma/j) than individuals.** *God is now at work among the Gentiles* (2:11) uniting them to Christ. Groups, however, are made up of individuals and Paul wants individual believers to appreciate God's purposes in election (Ephesians 1:3-4, 9-11).

**In the OT, the election of Israel is not to eternal salvation but an appointment to holy service.** *God did not appoint Israel to be served by the nations, but to serve the nations* (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). God did not appoint Christ to be served by mankind, but for Christ to service the redemptive needs of humanity (Mark 10:45). While the elect in the NT are chosen to salvation, they are also chosen to serve those who do not yet know the gospel (Ephesians 2:10; 3:1-10; Matthew 28:19, 20).

**Election is not about man's knowledge and will, but about the knowledge and will of God.** (Romans 8:28-29; 1 Peter 1:1-2). *Election does not infer that God knows who will respond to the gospel proclamation and then chooses them.* Because God wills certain people to respond to Him “*according to the good pleasure of his will,*” He knows. God does not set His love on the elect because of their foreseen faith, love, or good works. He sets His love on men who desperately need Him; i.e. the ungodly (Romans 4:5; 9:11). He elected men to be holy, not because they were holy.

**We must distinguish between “naturalistic” conception of salvation and the “supernaturalistic” conception of salvation.** “*Autosoterism*” originated with Pelagius -- a 4<sup>th</sup> century monk who believed that men could save themselves. The supernaturalistic view of salvation belongs to Augustine (354-430) who insisted men are incapable of saving themselves and that all powers essential to saving the soul are germane to God. “Pelagianism” glorifies man; “Augustinianism” glorifies God.

**The fact of election happened in eternity, not in time.** God no longer elects men and women to salvation. Consequently, there is a distinction between election and calling. *Election to be saved occurs in eternity; calling occurs in time* (Romans 8:28, 29). Those who respond to the Spirit's calling discover that they were chosen to this holy estate before the foundation of the world – before they had done “good or evil” (Romans 9:11).

**Election is not about the rejection of unbelievers, but about the election of believers.** Just as the election of Israel did not involve the rejection of other nations, so election in the NT does not involve the rejection of people. *Nothing in election implies the rejection of people or a predestination to hell.* Election is the revelation about God choosing people unto salvation (Romans 11:5, 7).

**The doctrine of election assumes the doctrine of total depravity.** It is because men are soiled in sin that election is necessary: “*there is none righteous, not even one*” and “*there is none who seeks after God*” (Romans 3:10, 11). Depravity is not partial, but **whole** – mind, soul, spirit, emotions, will, conscience, body. Unless God chooses and acts on the disposition of the sinner, none would be saved. Election is about God's preferences to save the lost. Jesus preferred the company of prostitutes and sinners; i.e. people with a need for Him. He is a merciful God and He has determined to save men based on His mercy rather than on the merits of men. Preaching mercy humbles man, and it was God's mercy towards undeserving sinners the Pharisees could not tolerate.

**The fact of election does not violate man's free will.** Those whom God elects, He “*draws*” (e`lku,sh|- “to drag off”) to Himself without compelling them to violate the necessity of choosing Christ (John 6:44). This paradox of grace does not eliminate human responsibility. *There is nothing in the NT about mechanized salvation.* There are no automatons in the kingdom of God. Everyone in the kingdom is in the kingdom because they want to be there.

Someone challenged the grace preaching of a black preacher and asked him what he did to save himself. The black man responded,

*“My part waz to runs away fum God as fast as mi fete wud carrie mi; God's part waz to runs after mi, catch mi, and brings mi to himself.”*

*Great theology, wudn't ya agree?*

**The motive of election is love after the “good pleasure of His will”** (Ephesians 1:5). God does not reluctantly save pitiful sinners. The first cause in salvation is not the will of man, but the will of God.

Because God wills and acts, our wills are freed to choose Christ. Salvation is the result of His electing love. In the Book of John the first person to be saved was the half-breed, Samaritan woman with five husbands.

*One day Christians will be displayed as sparkling trophies of God's grace in His eternal showcase. All creation will understand the wonder of this aspect of His love. The doctrine of election should be cherished, not resisted. It is meant for the glory of God and the enjoyment of man. It is a family secret to be enjoyed, not debated.*

**The purpose of election is “to the praise of the glory of his grace,”** (Ephesians 1:6). God reveals the truth about election, not to frustrate us, but that we might praise the excellencies of His grace. Election glorifies God and humbles man. *Tipping the balance of election to the side of freewill stains the glory of God and bolsters the arrogance of man.*

## **EFFECTS OF ELECTION**

**Upon the ungodly:** There is no affect upon the ungodly. Election is something that has happened to believers in eternity that they discover in time. The doctrine of election makes little sense to the ungodly and only aggravates him.

**Upon the repentant:** The message we preach is "whosoever will . . ." If elected, he will receive the message of the gospel with gladness of heart. In time, he will discover that God chose him. If a man does not receive the gospel, he rejects Christ. His own choice demonstrates a hardness of heart that condemns him to the just desserts of an eternal hell – his preferred position.

**Upon the saints:** It causes the elect to distrust his own works and to trust totally in the works of Christ on his behalf. It humbles him and strips him of pride. It invokes in him the overwhelming urge to boast in the glorious accomplishments of Christ. It produces in him a fearlessness of men and endows him with boldness before men.

*Romans 8:31 If God is for us, who can be against us?*

### **Areas of Agreement by Southern Baptists (1998).**

- All are agreed the doctrine of election is biblical and salvation is wholly God's action.
- All are agreed the whole of Scripture teaches election.
- All agree pastors should be evangelists of Jesus Christ, not evangelists of a system.
- All agree that any doctrine of election, which dismisses aggressive, confrontational evangelism is unworthy of the Spirit and mandate of the New Testament.
- All agree the doctrine of election must lead to humbleness because of the difficulty of wrestling through God's sovereignty and man's free will.



In conclusion, election is a precious truth to be enjoyed by God's people. Election has received a bad rap, but if election is taught correctly, the truth can lead the believer to a deeper appreciation of God's love and grace.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

### ***Romans 9:14-28***

Our text deals with the subject of the sovereignty of God. Few doctrines are more despised by the natural man than the truth that God is sovereign and exercises vigorous and efficacious control over man.

**R.C. Sproul** points out, while Christians profess to believe in the sovereignty of God, they really believe in human choices and the sovereignty of man. "It's their choice," they say. Therefore, it behooves us to look at this text and attempt to grasp its meaning and implications.

**The background of this passage** is germane to Paul's intense desire to see his own people come to salvation in Christ. Most of his brethren believed that their genetic relationship to Abraham was sufficient to make a claim on God and found no need to embrace Christ and His work at Calvary.

*Paul explained that not all Israelites were true Israelites; that is, not all of Abraham's descendants "in the flesh" could be considered genuine children of Abraham in spirit. Two examples were provided: Ishmael (9:9), and Esau (9:10-13). That is, Ishmael and Esau were both descendants of Abraham, but the Patriarchal blessings fell to Isaac not Ishmael, and then to Jacob and not Esau. The dreaded implication of this fact demonstrated that not all men claiming to have a genetic relationship to Abraham are going to enter the kingdom of God; that not all physical sons of Abraham are children of God; that is, one's heritage does not secure salvation.*

### **Q: Is God fair and just?**

***Romans 9:14-18 What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! 15 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18 So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.***

Having stated that not all physical descendants of Abraham are de jure children of God, and having provided two illustrations of election in Isaac and Jacob, Paul *anticipates an objection* and answers it with a question, "***Is there any injustice on God's part?***" Is God unjust in choosing some for salvation, but not others?

**First Answer:** The Apostle states that God was not unjust in sparing (granting a pardon to) some of the Israelites from judgment after they worshipped the golden calf.

He answers his own *objector question* with **a verse from the golden calf** (*eggel hazahav*) story in Exodus 32 wherein Aaron caved into the pressure of the rebels to make an idol for the nation. The golden calf was the result of Aaron's malleability to the will of the idolaters. Sound too familiar? So egregious was this

transgression that Moses grinded the abominable image into powder, threw it in the stream, and made the people drink it.

Next, Moses summoned volunteers to strap on their swords and to go through the camp to hack and whack the rebels. About 3,000 of the idolaters were executed. All were traitors. All were guilty. Three thousand were killed and the rest survived. The *dead* were objects of wrath; the *living* were objects of mercy.

Anticipating a question from the objector was God unjust in sparing the rest of the congregation from the sword? Paul's answer is "**No!**"

The LORD, by right of creation and by right of redemption, exercised total authority over the refugees from Egypt. He was **not** unjust in condemning some rebels to death, **nor** was He unfair in sparing others. It's called "*compassion*," and "*mercy*."

From this answer, Paul draws a spiritual truth from the pardon issued to the surviving Israelites: Salvation does not depend on the will of man nor the effort of men. Salvation is grounded solely in the mercy of God. He loves because of Who He is, a God of love.

*Salvation is of God and not of man!* All sinners deserve to die. None can save themselves from a judgment decreed. A pardon is available, but the pardon does not reside in the will of man or his effort to secure grace. It starts and ends with the will and mercy of the LORD God. "*Jesus came to save His people from their sins!*" He did **not** come to help them save themselves. Nor did He come to kill rebels. Selah! (Matthew 1:21)

**Second Answer:** The Apostle states that God was **not** unjust in hardening the heart of Pharaoh. The text says, "I raised thee up" to this position of power and influence (Exodus 19:16). It does **not** say, "I created thee to condemn thee."

**Pharaoh's hardening:** There are about 15 or more verses referring to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. About half of them inform us God hardened Pharaoh's heart; the other half instructs us that Pharaoh hardened his own heart.

Paul asserts that as God was **not** unjust in hardening the heart of Pharaoh, He was **not** jaundiced in hardening some of the Israelites against the gospel of Christ. All Israelites are sinners. All deserve judgment. God is not unjust for enlightening some for salvation nor is He unjust for blinding others to that same knowledge -- to blind people who want to be blind to the gospel -- to blind people who want to live without the knowledge of God in darkness.

The whole idea that God would harden any man's heart repulses the twisted logic of natural man. The text, however, informs us that *God was the Prime Mover* in the hardening — a thickening that resulted in the mighty display of power and deliverance of Israel from Egypt. The idea here is that God agitated Pharaoh and stirred him to reject Moses' petition to free the slaves so that God's glory might be put on full display to the whole world. And, Pharaoh appears to be happy with his anti-Christ position.

Much has been written on this subject. But, let it be noted that (a) ***Pharaoh consented to God's hardening his heart***; that is, it was the choice he was most naturally inclined to make; (b) that God did **not** harden a good man's heart in search of truth, but He hardened Pharaoh -- an evil man's heart in love

with power. God does **not** harden the hearts of good men . . . of weak men struggling with sin who want to know Him! But, then there is none good, but God.

If God hardens the heart of sinful men, it is *because they want it that way*; and, if God softens some hearts to hear and receive the gospel message, is God unjust? Paul's answer is "*No, may it never be.*"

He loves certain men not because men are lovable, but because He is a God of love. He does not love men because they are good, but because He is good. Selah!

**Note:** The LORD has **never** hardened the heart of an innocent man . . . of a pure, reasonable, honest, decent person that wants to be right with Him. It is not in His character to do so . . . "*a bruised reed He will not break*" (Isaiah 42:3). He gives grace to those who seek it . . . wisdom to those who ask Him for it . . . salvation to the one pursuing it by faith. **But**, the sad fact of history is that there are none "*that seeketh after God*" for "*there is none that doeth good. No not one.*" God must give man the desire to seek Him and the ability to do so. If a man seeks Him, it is because God placed that desire into his heart. Blessed be the Name of the Lord (Romans 3:10-13; Job 1:20-22).

God does not know who will and will not respond to Him and then elects the man who seeks Him. This is Arminianism. God chooses Who He will love and hate and then acts in history to carry out His will. Those who seek Him and trust the Son are elect of God! He does **not** know and then elects; **He knows because He elects!** God is not the Responder to acts of faith; He is the Elector and Giver of faith (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Q: Is man responsible?

*Romans 9:19-24 You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" 20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use? 22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory- 24 even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? 25 As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call my people."*

The structure of the apostle's argument:

**First**, Paul assumes the place of **the objector** and asks, "*Why does God find fault*" smf "*Is man responsible?*" He then deliberates two points: (1) the matter of credentials to ask such a question (9:20a), and (2) the matter of creation which contain the rights of the Creator over His creation (9:20b-21).

Next, the apostle discusses **two possible pre-destinations** (9:22-14): (1) vessels prepared for destruction (9:22), and (2) vessels prepared for glory (9:23-24).

In asking the question, "*Why does He find fault?*" Paul discerns **a spirit of pride in the objector**. "*Who O man, do you think you are?*" A "why" question demands accountability, and God is accountable to no man! It's the wrong question. Like a good lawyer, Paul answers a question with a question, "Who are you. O man, to answer back to God?"

Man calling the Judge to account for His decisions? What arrogance! What kind of man dares to cross-examine the eternal God? Just who do you think you are to question the all knowing, all good, all wise, all powerful Creator to hold Himself accountable to the likes of little ol' you -- a man of dust? What are your credentials to ask such questions? Isn't pride at work? Even a man with a sack full of PhDs doesn't have the acumen to judge the Father. He is accountable to no man especially Dr. Know-it-Alls at the University of Big Heads.

**Second**, the apostle directs us to *the creative rights of God*. The author and creator of a thing has all rights over his invention, does he not?

Will the molded say to the molder, "*Why have you made me thus?*" It is a proud question because it presumes the created object is equal to the Creator. As Creator of all things, He has rights over that which He makes.

The **Potter-Clay illustration** is really a *reduction ad absurdum argument* because Paul traces the implication of the question to its logical conclusion. In creating the clay pot, the Potter retains all rights over the vessel; and, the vessel has no qualifications or authority to question the Potter's purpose.

Likewise, election is wrapped in God's creative purpose for His creatures and the creature has no authority to question the Creator!

Next, the apostle asks a "*What if . . . question*" designed to probe the audiences' understanding of reality.

We are finite beings with limited a knowledge of God. Paul, therefore, seeks to enlarge metaphysical possibilities and to expand the viewpoint of his readers. Could it be, asks the apostle, that God created some vessels for wrath and others for glory? **Wrath is a virtue of Almighty God.**

**Q:** Could the Potter create a vessel to expose and testify to the virtue of His wrath and patience?

Closer to home

(1) Doesn't the presence of evil men demonstrate the patience of God? Consider the rich and famous in our times. In the end, they will be used as cannon fodder to authenticate His wrath.

(2) On the other hand, there are vessels prepared for glory, "*even us*" says the apostle (24). What can God's mercy and compassion produce? Well, look at the Christian community made up of believing Jews and Gentiles. God has taken vile, shameless, despicable sinners hell-bent on exploiting every vice, convicted them of their sin, and saved them by the work of His Son.

Look at the marvelous transformation of sinners—a testament to the grace and goodness of God. Is God unjust for preparing luscious culinary dishes to be enjoyed by men of faith in the banquet in the kingdom of God? "*May it never be,*" declared Paul (14).

(3) Finally, notice the **two verbs** for "*prepared*" in verses 22-23. They are two different words.

The **first** (fitted / *katartiso*) is in *the passive voice* and the **second** (prepared / *pretoimazo*) in *the active voice*.

The *vessels of wrath* are being *fitted* / *prepared* (passive voice) for destruction; God, on the other hand, *prepared* (active voice) certain vessels for glory.

*The active voice* informs us that the subject of the verb is doing the action; the passive voice informs us that the subject is the object of action and voluntarily receive the motion of the verb. Thus, the use of the active voice in reference to the vessels of mercy inform us that God is the active Savior, the One doing the saving; the passive voice informs us that the subject is being acted upon, the vessels of wrath, and that they appear to be willfully receiving their appointment.

There is a story of an atheist who dared God to strike him dead in five minutes. The audience nervously waited. At the end of five minutes, he said, "You see, there is no God." After the talk, two coeds were talking wherein one asked the other what he thought about the speaker's proof there is no God. The other said, "No, he didn't prove there was no God. He just proved even an arrogant bast\*\*d like him can't exhaust the patience of God in five minutes."

In conclusion, the apostle exalts the sovereignty of God in salvation. He is **not** unjust for saving some and not saving others. Salvation is of God, not man. If you are a Christian, your heart should be exploding with profound thankfulness; if you are not a believer, I would think your heart should be filled with fear. You are, after all, responsible for your own soul.

## 66. THE BLESSING OF THE CHURCH

*Matthew 16:15-18 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.*

It is good news that believers are part of an eschatological community, God's new creation, who share together in the gifts of Eschaton. When a man puts his trust in Christ, he soon discovers that he is a part God's family -- a glorious fellowship of redeemed saints who share together in the blessings of the kingdom of God.

### MEANING OF THE WORD "CHURCH"

There is a difference between the denotation and the connotation of a word. The Greek word for "church" is *ecclesia* (evklhsi,a). It refers to "called out ones." The root word is from *kaleo* which means "to call or to summon." It originally meant "an assembly of citizens." The word applied to the assembly of Israel. The word "synagogue" (sunagwgh/j) is from "sun" and "to bring" (Acts 13:43) was commonly employed. The term *ecclesia* was given in direct contrast to the concept of synagogue, the Jewish gathering.

The five important words, "I will build my church" are filled with meaning:

- "I" means the growth of the church is dependent on Christ.

- “will” implies His determination to build this institution.
- “build” suggest a slow, positive, progressive construction.
- “my” suggest ownership by Christ.
- “Church” implies a distinction between this and other associations in existence.

## **CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH**

*The church is composed of called out ones from among Israel.* When the gospel was preached to Israel, the spiritually responsive of Israel responded by faith to become Messiah's called out ones, the church, a new Israel. The church is not geo-political Israel, but many in geo-political Israel belong to the church. The church is not Christendom, but many in Christendom belong to the Church. The church is not limited to a particular denomination, but many people in denominations are a part of the church. The church is not necessarily an organization though God's work may be organized.

*The church is composed of called out ones from among the Gentiles.* The church is a people who stand in a special relationship to God. The church is the new people of God. Hosea named one of his sons “not my people” (Hosea 1:9) for apostate Israel whom God renounced as His people. However, in the day of salvation, “not my people” shall be called “sons of the living God” (Hosea 1:10). In Hosea, these prophecies refer to Israel, but Paul applied them to the church, which consists of Jews and Gentiles (Romans 9:24). The Gentiles were “not my people.” But, in Christ, believing Gentiles are united to the messianic community to become “His people.”

*The church is composed of spiritual people.* The coming of the eschatological Spirit in history created the Church. The church, therefore, is a product of the powers of the age to come. “By one Spirit, we are all baptized into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13. 2 Corinthians 13:14 can be rendered “the fellowship created by the Holy Spirit.”

*The church is an eschatological community.* Since the church has been created by the work of the Holy Spirit, an eschatological gift is given through the *kerigma* of the kingdom (proclamation), and since the church has been justified by Christ, an eschatological decree, the church can be thought of as an eschatological people who enjoy the blessing of the kingdom in advance of its cataclysmic entrance into history.

*The church is composed of citizens in the kingdom of God (Philippians 3:20):* The word *politeuma* designates a colony of foreigners whose organization reflects their native homeland. Our homeland is in heaven, but our colony is on Earth (Ladd, 1974, p. 541).

*The church is a fellowship of men (koinonia) (Acts 2:42).* The church is a fellowship of men who share a common relationship to Christ, who enjoy the blessings of His accomplishments together (deliverance from sin, Satan, and death), and who share a common life.

*The church is composed of people who have God as their Father.* The church has organic unity because each member can say that God is his Heavenly Father. This unity is not organizational. Rather, it is spiritual affiliation. The basis of unity is not based on light (truth -- an agreement on all doctrine), nor on

love (the fruit of truth), but life (the relationship that we share in Christ). For this reason, Christians can rightly call each other “brother and sister.”

The church, however, is not the same as denomination or building where people gather or a 501 c 3 religious organization.

## THE CHURCH AND ISRAEL

When the OT came to an end, it became apparent that the nation of Israel as a whole would never experience covenant blessings because of the nation's disobedience. The blessings of the covenant appear to pass as a promise to Christ, the True Israel of God, and true Israel's faithful remnant (Haggai 1:12, 14; 2:2; Zechariah 8:11-12; Malachi 3:16-17).

When the NT opens, Jesus announces the KOG to Israel (Matthew 9:35: 10:5-7).

*Matthew 9:35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

*Matthew 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not.*

*Matthew 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

*Matthew 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

The basic demand of the kingdom was to acknowledge Him and to surrender to His authority:

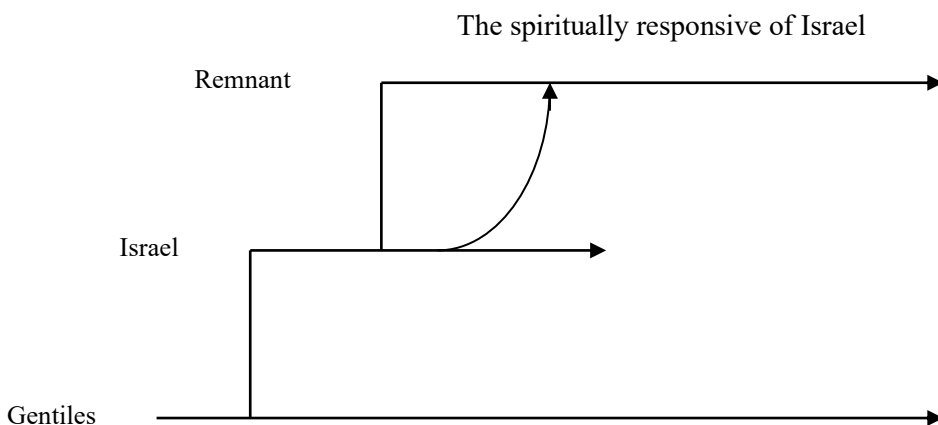
*Matthew 10:32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*

Jesus invited the Jews to come to Him, the True Israel of God:

*Matthew 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

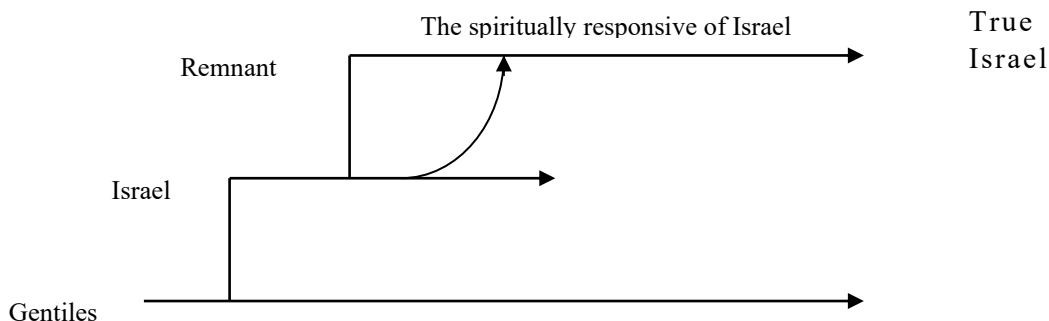
*Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

### **Figure 9: The Spiritually Responsive**



Israel’s response as a whole to Christ was one of rejection (Matthew 10:17; 11:16-18; 12:28-45), but those who did respond became part of Israel’s faithful remnant—the true Israel

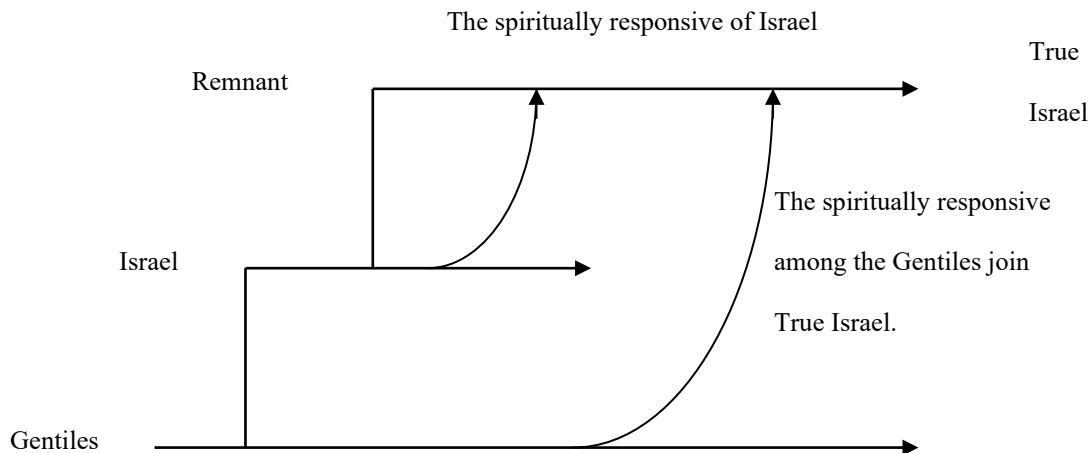
**Figure 10: True Israel**



The kingdom was promised to Israel, but the kingdom was only inherited by those Israelites who believed that Jesus was the Christ (Matthew 16:16) and who received Him as such (John 1:10-13; 3:3). The disciples responded to Christ and became “the sons of the kingdom” (Matthew 13:37), the “good soil” (Matthew 13:33), the “remnant” (Romans 9:27), and the “elect” (Romans 11:7). ***The disciples were the spiritually response of Israel, and thus, the true Israel of God.***

After Pentecost, the Good News spread throughout the Roman Empire. The Gentiles responded. Like the believing Jews before them, they received the Holy Spirit and inherited the benefits of Christ’s history (Acts 10; 11:18; Romans 1:16ff; Galatians 3). The Spirit enrolled these believing Gentiles into the





Messianic Community, the spiritually responsive of Israel, to form a new community. Paul informs us that God "*built again the tabernacle of David*" by adding Gentiles to the "*Israel of God*." Furthermore, the church absorbs all of Israel's symbols and is itself called a "*candlestick*," Israel's most sacred symbol. It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the believing Gentiles are a part of the Messianic community, the true Israel of God. (Galatians 6:15, 16; Acts 15:14-16; Revelation 1:18ff).

Jesus did not restore the fortunes of Israel, nor did He set up His kingdom on earth. Rather, He invaded the kingdom of darkness, redeemed men to Himself, and created a new race, a new humanity, a new creation of men. He did **not** create a religious order based on some rule. This new race of people are **not** mere "*subjects*" of the kingdom, but actual citizens of the kingdom -- ones who share together the benefits of his death, burial, and resurrection (Matthew 12:29; Ephesians 1:19-22; 1 Timothy 2:11-12). Believing Jews and believing Gentiles co-share in the blessing of the kingdom and are the true Israelites of God. This new community inherited the OT promises and became stewards of Israel's sacred symbols

*2 Corinthians 7:1 Having therefore these **promises**, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

*Revelation 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden **candlesticks**;*

## THE COVENANT VIEW OF THE CHURCH

**Hodge** (1992) sees the church as existing in the Old Testament. The church is an extension of spiritual Israel composed of all Jewish believers from the time of Abraham to the end of this age; that the church is identical to Israel of old; and that the church is grafted into the same tree (p. 486). For a proof text, Hodge used the following:

*Acts 7:38 This is he, that was in the Church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.*

Hodge, however, is being over inclusive. The trouble with calling the remnant "the church" in the OT is that it doesn't properly recognize God's work in history in the New Testament nor does it recognize the

unique and marvelous character of the NT church as the temple of God. The OT people had a temple, but the NT church is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

### **THE DISPENSATIONAL VIEW OF THE CHURCH**

**Chafer** at DTS (1947-48) disagrees with Hodge and lists four reasons why the church began at Pentecost (Vol. IV, p. 44).

- Since the church's purity is based wholly on the blood of Christ and is, therefore, dependent on his death for existence, the church did not exist before His death.
- The church is based on resurrection life. There could be no church before the resurrection.
- The church is dependent on headship, and therefore, could not exist before His ascension.
- The church is dependent on the quickening of the Spirit, and could not, therefore, exist before the Pentecost.

Chafer properly recognizes the historical development of God's redemptive program and properly distinguished between Israel as a nation and the church. However, Chafer doesn't seem to recognize any continuity between believing Jews in the OT and believing Jews and Gentiles in the NT. People who read Chafer developed a "two peoples of God" theology. Furthermore, Chafer's dispensationalism became a tool for Zionism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **DISPENSATIONALISM AND ZIONISM**

The Christian must never forget that the Jews in Jesus' day opposed Christ, were judged "enemies of the gospel" (Romans 11:28), and declared members of the Synagogue of Satan (Revelation 2:9; 3:9). The beliefs of first century Jewry were formulated and written down in the Babylonian Talmud—a work that spawned the damnable beliefs of Zionism at work in our time.

## **ZIONISM DEFINED**

Zionism is a radical political philosophy that believes that the Jewish people are destined to rule the world which includes the development of the State of Israel. Zionism is supported by Jewish people as well as some zealous Christians. "At its core, Zionism is fundamentally racist, extremist, undemocratic, and militant" (Lendman, 2009). Today, Zionists and co-religionists have complete control of our government, all the newspapers, television, the BAR association, the ACLU, and Hollywood resulting in the complete indoctrination of the American public resulting in a pawn relationship to the master Zionists (Freedman, 1961).

*The Jews -- I call them Jews to you, because they are known as Jews. I don't call them Jews. I refer to them **as so-called Jews**, because I know what they are. If Jesus was a Jew, there isn't a Jew in the world today, and if those people are Jews, certainly **our Lord and Savior was not one of them**, and I can prove that (Benjamin Freedman).*

Political Zionism was fathered by Theodore Herzl as a political movement in 1897, but actually began earlier than this. Between 1870 and 1897, about 20 Jewish settlements were started in Palestine by the

*Lovers of Zion.* Christian Zionism is a primal, theological precept that originated with J.N. Darby (1800-1882), an Irish Anglican priest and a British citizen. Darby developed the “secret rapture” theory of the saints and the doctrine regarding the re-establishment of the nation of Israel in the end times. In the 1800s, the British had all kinds of proto-Christian beliefs about a future for Israel circulating within British academia. Darby formalized a portion of these theories and influenced C. I. Scofield, author of the Scofield Bible Notes—notes that were Zionist thru and thru. Chafer, Walvoord, Ryrie, Pentecost, and Hal Lindsey perpetuated the theories culminating in the Zionist book, the Late Great Planet Earth.

One of the influential British social reformers to be influenced by premillennial theology was Lord Shaftesbury, a conservative evangelical Christian who was intimately linked to leading members of the British Parliament. In 1839, Lord Shaftesbury published an essay in the distinguished literary journal the Quarterly Review, titled “The State and Restoration of the Jews,” where he argued: “(T)he Jews must be encouraged to return (to Palestine) in yet greater numbers and become once more the husbandman of Judea and Galilee” (Wagner, 2003).

William Hechler (1845-1931), an Anglican Clergyman and eschatological writer, and a man familiar with Darby and Lord Shaftesbury, met Herzl in Vienna during the 1880s. He enthusiastically endorsed Herzl's Zionist's project, and used his political connections to further the international Zionist's cause. This resulted in a meeting with Arthur Balfour in 1905, a meeting that would result in *the Balfour Declaration in 1917* (Wagner, 2003).

## **ZIONISM AND WWII**

WWI broke out in July 1914. Britain, Russia, and France were jealous of Germany's industrial progress and united to humble Germany's success. At the time of Napoleon, German consisted of small city states with dukedoms and magistrates. By 1910, these consolidated states united and became a world industrial superpower. And, the triple powers were jealous. At this time, the rich, young United States was pro German and anti-British. Jews in the United States, Kun Loeb and other big bankers, despised the Czars and refused to finance Britain and France. Rather, they poured their money and influence into Germany hoping the Germans would send the Russian bears back to Siberia. **But . . . and this was a big “BUT.” Those same Zionist Jews saw an opportunity to obtain ancient Palestine as a Jewish, Zionist State!!**

To put it bluntly, Britain, France, and German was getting their tails kicked in this war with Germany. The German U-boat program decimated the British fleets and threatening the British with starvation. The Germans even offered their enemies peace if the British, French, and Russians would just pack up and go home.

Delegates of these Zionist Jews went to the British and prevailed upon them to sponsor a resolution to support a Zionist state in Palestine, and in exchange, these Zionist Jews would guarantee America's involvement in this war on the side of the British. “You can still win this war . . .” if the United States will come in as your ally. “We will guarantee it,” said the Zionist Jews . . . But, You must assist us in obtaining Palestine as homeland for Jewish people. The deal was made! Suddenly, the Jewish owned newspapers in America accused the Germans of being villains, cutting off babies' hands, and shooting Red Cross nurses. Within a year, public opinion shifted. The sinking of the Lusitania outraged Americans (May, 1915). The principle of Action-Reaction-Solution lit the fires of American patriots. Like lions,

printing presses roared against the Germans. President Wilson, being ill-advised, declared war on Germany in April, 1917—a European war America had no business being in—a war started so Zionist Jews could obtain Palestine -- -but, who knew this at the time.<sup>47</sup> Shortly, thereafter, the Zionist Jews wanted something in writing. Their receipt was the **Balfour Declaration**—a letter from Arthur James Balfour to Baron Walter Rothschild, the leader of the Zionist Community in Great Britain (Wagner, 2003):

*His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country (Yapp, 1987).*

The United States crushed Germany. At the Peace Conference in Paris in 1919, there were 117 Jews present headed by Bernard Baruch, the American financier and statesman. Present at this conference was Walther Rathenau (1867-1922), the wealthy German industrialist; representatives from Albert Ballin big steamship lines of Germany; Arnold and S. Bleichroeder, New York/German Bankers for the Hohenzollern Family; The Warburg family dynasty in German. The greatest big merchant bankers were at this peace conference . . . and the Germans had been good to them and they did very well in Germany. And, it was at this conference the Germans learned Germany had been “sold out” by the Zionist, geo-political Jews for a piece of real estate in the Middle East.

To say the Germans were angry and resented the betrayal by the Zionists would be an understatement!! Can you say “*treason?*” Imagine how the surviving Germans felt! Germany had given them refuge; treated them well; made them rich; and now the Zionist Jews betrayed the nation for a Zionist agenda in Palestine!

The Germans did not hate the Jews because they were Jewish or allegedly “Semitic,” **but because of their political betrayal!!** There was no anti-religious sentiment. No one in Germany cared if the Jews ate bagels or quoted the “Shema Yisrael” or “Our Father” in Germany. But, they did care about loyalty! The Jews were now hated for their treason, their politics, and their economic lusts. Furthermore, 98% of Jews in Europe were **Communists**. The loss of the war was blamed on treasonous acts by communist Jews . . . and, rightly so!! Thus, the Germans (1933) began to punish the Zionist Jews by boycotting their businesses and shunned them much like the Americans shunned the Chinese who migrated to this country in the 1850s (Wagner, 2003).

Tension mounted! Jews from every country in the world attended a meeting in Amsterdam to figure out a way to calm German resentment. The solution? War against Germany! An ultimatum -- Fire Hitter! Remember, there were no overt “communists” in Germany in 1933. They were called “social democrats” —450,000 strong. These “social democrats” controlled the press, controlled imports, controlled the banks, and controlled the economy. Mr. Untermyer came back to the United States -- who was the head of the American delegation and the president of the whole conference -- and he went from the steamer to ABC and made a radio broadcast throughout the United States in which he said:

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<sup>47</sup> Woodrow Wilson, *War Messages*, 65th Cong., 1st Sess. Senate Doc. No. 5, Serial No. 7264, Washington, D.C., 1917; pp. 3-8, *passim*.

*"The Jews of the world now **declare a Holy War against Germany**. We are now engaged in a sacred conflict against the Germans. And we are going to starve them into surrender. We are going to use a world-wide boycott against them, that will destroy them because they are dependent upon their export business." (Quoted by Wagner, 2003).*

The German Jews devised a way to bring the "German Christians" to their knees by boycotting German businesses, German industry, and by selling cheap imported goods. The importers and sellers, of course, were Zionists Jews. What? The Jews of the world declaring a boycott of German goods produced in Germany? The boycott was so effective, a shopper in Germany couldn't find any products in a store with the words, "Made in Germany" on it. If a Jew went into a German shop and found a product on it with the words, "Made in Germany," the Jews picketed the stores with signs, "Hitler," "Murderers," and so forth. Tension mounted, but no Jews were hurt. There was no suffering, no starvation, no murder, there was nothing. When Hitler took office, the Nazi's burned the Reichstag and blamed it on the communist, socialist Jews. The boycott began. Yes, the Germans, in retaliation, painted swastikas on Jewish stores. But, when a Jew walked into the German embassy in Paris and shot one of the German officials, the Germans retaliated . . . and the rest is history. The "Final Solution" had nothing to do with "anti-Semitism," but it had everything to do with Zionists' betrayal and politics. "The Final Solution," by the way had nothing to do planned extermination of the Jews. No written order has ever been found wherein the Nazis ordered the murder of Jews.

Europe faced a decision, says Benjamin Freedman, an American Jewish New York business man. A decision to be Christian or communists; that is, to follow the Christian principle of lending money without interest or follow the Talmudic principle of loaning money at interest to Gentiles for the exclusive benefit of Jewish bankers. The Germans made the decision to rid themselves of Talmudic economics and the world punished them for it.

### **ZIONISM SUCCEEDS**

Laden with guilt, post war Europe, Britain, and America became instruments of the Zionism. Zionists, having control of newspapers, exploited Jewish's suffering to create public sympathy for the Zionist cause in Palestine. In 1948, Britain walked away from Palestine and the Zionists declared Palestine a Jewish state. Thousands of Christian Palestinians lost their home land.

### **GERMAN SUFFERING IN WWII**

Yes, the Jews suffered in WWII; and, Yes, Hitler's "Final Solution" was extreme. But why have Zionist bankers and industrialists escaped blame? How come no one mentions German suffering or the dismantling of Christian Germany by Jews? Or, Eisenhower's Death Camps wherein millions of Germans were systematically starved to death? (Bacque, 1989). Or, the Russian holocaust wherein 60 million "Christian" Russians were brutally butchered by the Jewish Bolsheviks? (Fojut, 7-21-7) The answer, of course, is Jewish propaganda. Zionist control the media.

How about the suffering of German men and women? Many sincere and devout Christians suffered at the hands of Zionists? Michael Walsh, a UK News Desk Director, placed on the internet, the verbatim publication of J. Austin's publication in 1946, "*Ravishing the Women of Conquered Europe*." This shocker is placed here in part to balance out the propaganda perpetuated by Zionists in the media.

*"Berlin (as the Reds approached in 1945) had become virtually a city without men. Out of the civilian population of 2,700,000 roughly 2,000,000 were women. Small wonder that the fear of sexual attack raced through the city like a plague ... doctors were besieged by patients seeking information about the quickest way to commit suicide, and poison was in great demand."*

*When the Reds had the city this terror became unspeakable reality. Time Magazine says, "The later waves of Soviet soldiers went wild. Rape, plunder, and suicide became commonplace. Soldiers entered the Haus Dahlem, an orphanage, maternity hospital and foundling home, and repeatedly raped pregnant women and those who had recently given birth. All told, the number of rape victims in Berlin - ranging from women of 70 to little girls of ten - will never be known, although Ryan reports estimates from doctors that run from 20,000 to 100,000."*

*The foulest atrocity occupation troops can commit is rape; sad to say it is an allied atrocity, not a German one.*

*Our fellow re-educators of Germany, our Russian Allies, entered Danzig, March 24, 1945. A 50-year old Danzig teacher reports that the following day her niece, 15, was raped seven times, her other niece, 22, fifteen times. A Russian officer told the women to seek safety in the Cathedral. After they were securely in, our brothers-in-arms entered and, playing the organ and ringing the bells, kept up a foul orgy through the night, raping all the women, some more than thirty times (See Nord-Amerika, December 6, 1945, p.1) . . .*

#### **RE-EDUCATING THE GERMANS WITH CONDOMS**

*As soon as the American government had lend-leased our American boys into the war to bring the Germans to Christianity it issued its 'modern crusaders' (as even Archbishop Spellman called them) '50,000,000 prophylactics (condoms) a month.' (Time, September 3, 1945) . . .*

*Equipped with 50,000,000 immoral condoms and graphically instructed in their use, the modern crusaders swarmed in to teach the Germans Christianity - and to have a 'wonderful time.' Their government furthermore instructed them that marriage with the inferior-blooded Germans was absolutely forbidden but having illegitimate children with German women (whose husbands and boyfriends were being inconveniently held as slave laborers) could count on allowance money (See Associated Press Dispatch, Berlin September 12, 1945) "German-American marriages forbidden."*

*Catholic pastor of Danzig declares, "They violated even eight-year old girls and shot boys who tried to protect their mothers."*

#### **NEITHER OLD NOR YOUNG, NOR NUNS ARE SPARED**

*The day after our noble fellow-crusaders conquered Neisse, Silesia, 182 Catholic nuns were raped. "In the Diocese of Kattowitz sixty-six pregnant nuns were counted." In one convent where the Mother Superior and assistant tried to protect the younger nuns with arms outstretched, they were shot down. The priest who reported this said he knows "several villages, where all the women, even the aged and girls as young as twelve, were violated daily for weeks by the Russians." (See Nord-Amerika, November 1, 1945).*

*"WE ALLIES ARE NO MONSTERS!" AREN'T WE?*

*"We Allies are no monsters," said Churchill to the Germans in January 1945. "This at least, I can say on behalf of the United Nations, to Germany .... Peace though based on unconditional surrender, will bring to Germany, and Japan immense and immediate alleviation of suffering and agony." (Time Magazine, January 29, 1945).*

*"Oh yeah?" as a newsboy might say. Since that time the Allies who are no monsters have raped more Christian women than have literally ever been raped in the history of the world. They have put Germany on a 1300-calory starvation level; they have looted twelve million people of their homes, goods, food, and even clothes, and driven them from their homelands; they have kept or taken one-quarter of their farmlands and their ships and their factories, and most of their farm implements and then told them to live by farming.*

*They have abused and starved to death more German babies than there were ever Jews in Germany; and finally they raped and debauched hundreds of thousands of German, Austrian and Hungarian girls and women from eight to eighty. They brought to their death five times as many Germans in one year of peace as died during the five years of war! Yes, Yes! We Allies are no monsters!"*

#### **BERLIN, IT WAS THE MOST AWFUL SIGHT**

*After British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin saw what the Allies were doing to some "fifteen million German 'displaced persons'," that had been looted and driven from their homes he cried in Parliament, "I felt, my God, that is the price of man's stupidity .... It was the most awful sight." (Time Magazine, November 5, 1945 p.30).*

*But he is wrong calling it 'man's stupidity' - It is the Big Three lust for injustice; it is their lust for a harsh, power-political peace, that is what it is. It is a crime not a stupidity.*

*Time Magazine (October 2, 1945. P.27), describing the mass expulsion "of at least nine million Germans from East Prussia, Danzig, Silesia, Pomerania and the Sudetenland says, "it is a tale of horror, old men starving on the roads, young girls raped in box cars." And the holy crusaders who are doing this raping have the shamelessness of trying whole classes of Germans as war criminals!*

*Sylvester C. Michelfelder, a Lutheran Pastor, just returned from Germany describes in The Christian Century how "Bands of irresponsible bandits in Russian or American uniforms pillage and rob the trains. Women and girls are violated in sight of everyone. They are stripped of their clothes." Yes, the holy re-educators of Germany are having a wonderful time.*

#### **THE GERMAN ARMIES THE MOST DECENT ARMIES OF THE WAR**

*In Stuttgart, troops under General Eisenhower's command, with whom his communications were not severed, raped more women in one week in one city than troops under Adolf Hitler's command seem to have raped in four years in all of France.*

*For such literally seems to be the facts, however discomfiting to decent Americans. The bewildering fact is emerging that the German troops of occupation, 7,000,000 of whom, according to an Associated Press Nuremberg Dispatch of February 28, 1946, Justice Robert H. Jackson, Chief U.S. Prosecutor wants outlawed and presumably executed as 'war criminals', were the most decent large quantity troops of World War II. That they did far less raping and looting than the allied troops can no longer be questioned.*

*In their behavior towards women of the conquered territories, the German troops were actually to have been the most correct and decent in the whole history of warfare. William Shirer (who is Jewish) in his 'Berlin Diary', on June 17, 1940, in the first flush of German occupation, described how many French women had fled Paris for fear of the Germans. "It seems," he wrote, 'The Parisians actually believed the Germans would rape the women and o worse to the men. The ones who stayed are all the more amazed at the very correct behavior of the troops (p. 412).*

*After four years of German occupation, Frederick C. Crawford, President of Thompson Products, on January 4, 1945, in a 'Report from the War Front' where with others the U.S. War Department had taken him on an inspection tour, said, 'The Germans tried to be careful in their dealings with the people. We were told that if a citizen attended strictly to business and took no political or underground action against the occupying army, he was treated with correctness.' (p.5). In short, wherever Americans have been able to investigate for themselves, they have found that however ruthless the Germans were with resisters and saboteurs, they were uncommonly Christian and decent towards the women of the conquered. They seem to have committed no more rape in conquered territories than the American troops committed right here at home and in fellow-allied countries. (Note. In German law the crime of rape even in war was expressly forbidden and carried the death penalty).*

*However, one can insist gratefully, in the matter of rape American (and British) occupation troops in Germany have not been notoriously bad. In that respect it seems true to say what novelist John Dos Passos said of looting. "When Americans looted they took cameras and valuables but when the Russians looted they took everything. They raped and killed." Time Magazine, January 7, 1946. P.24).*

#### GERMAN WOMEN TREATED AS FAIR OBJECTS OF DEBAUCHERY

*The nasty charge that seems justified is that the American government and army authorities and too many of the soldiers seem to regard German women as fair objects of insult and debauchery, deprived of respect and rights by unconditional surrender. There is too much of the spirit typified by one Military Government head in Munich who said, 'Rights! You have no rights. You're conquered, ya hear?' (New Republic, July 16, 1945, p.65), and by Admiral 'Bull' Halsey's after dinner remark to Washington newspapermen regarding Japanese women, "I hate Japs. I am telling you men that if I met a pregnant Japanese woman, I'd kick her in the belly.'*

*The troops seem to treat German women so regularly and insultingly as prostitutes that if their wives were brought they would have to wear uniform because 'The GIs did not want their wives mistaken for frauleins by other occupation troops.' (INS, London, January 31, 1946). If even in France 'some Frenchmen began carrying truncheons at night to protect their wives and sisters from GI insults," according to Time (November 19, 1945), one can imagine how the re-educators act in Germany, where one serviceman writes that he shivers 'at the apparent absence of basic human decency displayed by so many GIs.' (Time Magazine, November 12, 1945). "That's the way it is' said the captain, 'Americans look on the German women as loot, just like cameras and Lugers.' (N.Y. World Telegram, January 21, 1945).*

The purpose of this long quotation is for the reader to grasp how easily it is to be brainwashed. Our perspective is twisted because we do not have all the major facts of history. Zionism is the cause of so



much suffering . . . and, we should be alert to its activity in our time (Solzhenitsyn: The "Conscience of the 20th Century"<sup>48</sup>).

### **THEOLOGICAL ZIONISM**

There is hardly a burp in the Middle East wherein some dispensationalist doesn't feel compelled to write a book on the end-times. Doomsday fever is rampant. Pessimism reigns. And, dispensationalists like Charles Ryrie, Dwight Pentecost, and Hal Lindsey are much to blame. Sensationalist, Hal Lindsey, published his book, the Late Great Planet Earth, and doomsday preppers cropped up all over America. When Zionist Jews gained control and called their new regime "Israel," dispensationalists turned orgasmic. Thousands of books and pamphlets appeared. The rapturists predicted that Christ was going to return by 1988, forty years after Israel became a nation. Pulpits shook; fists pounded; pastors foaming at the mouth with eyes on fire predicted the rapture was going to occur in 1988—forty years after the Jews of the dispersion regained control of "their homeland." Doubters were diagnosed as insane.

The Bible student should be true to Scripture, keep his head down, learn a lesson from this Dispensational blunder, and not be taken in by Zionist theories and propaganda, whether coming from the Jewish controlled media, or from the naivety of modern Christians.

### **EVIDENCE THE CHURCH BEGAN AT PENTECOST**

The word "*church*" is used seventy-six times in the New Testament, two times before Pentecost, and seventy-six times after Pentecost. The whole concept of the baptism of the Spirit, the "*placing of the believer into the body of Christ*" happens only by the operation of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). It could not happen before the Spirit descended in Acts 2.

The church is a mystery, that is, it was not revealed in the Old Testament (Ephesians 3:3). Paul says the church is a "*new man*;" that is, it is *a new society of men, a fellowship of men, and a new humanity*. These churches met all over the Roman Empire, primarily in homes for the first three centuries. It would be a mistake to identify the church totally with Israel as it would be to totally separate the church from God's work in past dispensations. The church is **not** geo-political Israel revive, but neither are there two peoples of God. There is one people of God and believing Jews in the OT and believers in the NT make up one family of God (Ephesians 3:10).

The church must be kept separate from geo-political Israel, and maybe it is best, to recognize the historical transition that took place in the Book of Acts from God's work among Jews (OT Israel) to God's work among Gentiles, which includes them as part of household of God; i.e. spiritual Israel.

James saw the addition of the Gentiles to the Messianic Community the means by which God was fulfilling His promise to David.

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<sup>48</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the famous Russian writer who has been called the "Conscience of the 20th Century," served eight long years in the Soviet Gulag prison system. He was hated by top-level Jews in America and around the world because he exposed the Jewish leadership of the genocide of 66 million Communist Gulag victims. Many victims were Christians (Texe Marrs).

*Acts 15:16 After this I will return, and will build again the **tabernacle of David**, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:*

It is important to know that the modern State of Israel (1948) is **not** made up ethnic Hebrew-Jews **nor** are they the people of God. While the nation is democratic and may be supported politically, they are **not** the people of the Eschaton nor are they the people of God. The Ashkenazi Jew is either an atheistic Gentile or a Gentile who chose the Jewish faith—a faith opposed to the gospel of Christ—a cult that denies the deity of Christ. **Neither** the Ashkenazi Jews or Sephardic Jews are related to Abraham genetically. Even if he was, his ethnicity grants no privileges in the eyes of the Lord (Matthew 3). It is faith in Christ that pleases God — not one's genetics (Galatians 3:28).

There are **not** two peoples of God **nor** is God's redemptive program centered on Israel. **The great work of God in history is the church.** Israel was merely a temporary intercalation in the divine program.

## **NAMES OF THE CHURCH**

**A New Creation** (Ephesians 2:15): The church is a new creation, a new breed of humanity that shares the life of Christ. This name infers continuity with Israel as well as discontinuity with the OT nation.

**Saints** (1 Corinthians 1:2): From the divine side, the church is a fellowship of holy ones (*hagioi*) or the sanctified (*hagiasmenoi*). People are set apart for divine use. The term *hagios* is never used in an individual since; rather, it is corporate product of redemptive history. It does **not** refer to the ethical character of the people of God, only to their exalted position.

**A flock** (John 10:16): No man owns Christ alone; Christians own him together and are a part of His community. Dispensationalists say the church is called “a flock” not a fold and that the Jewish people were a fold out of whom Christ called His flock. But, this distinction is unnecessary.

**God's vineyard** (1 Corinthians 3:9): The metaphor communicates the interest of the owner and the focus of his labor. Geo-political Israel was a “fruitless vine,” but the Church is a fruitful vineyard—His great work in history.

**A temple** (Ephesians 2:22) or **God's building** (1 Corinthians 3:9): The metaphor communicates the process of erecting a temple, an eschatological hope of the children of Israel. Stephen was the first to see the Jewish temple as irrelevant (Acts 7:48), and Paul perceived the Christian community as the eschatological temple of God, as the place where God dwells and is worshipped. It has a foundation, sides, and a roof. It is distinct from the OT temple in that **people** are the “living stones” out of which this edifice is constructed. God cannot be found in Judaism or a synagogue, but God can be found in the Church, which is called “his temple.”

**His body** (Ephesians 1:19-23): The Latin word for “body” (*soma*) is “*corpus*.” The church is the living *corpus* of Christ. The body speaks of the church's identification with Christ. It is **not** a body or society of men, but the body of Christ. It symbolizes unity, oneness, and visibility as a living organism. However, the metaphor falls short of complete identity. The church is the visible representation/manifestation of the invisible Christ. Every Christian is united to the body of Christ at His conversion by the Spirit of God and is given a gift and a place to serve within the organism. The church is organized but it is not an

organization. Its business is the gospel, but it is not a business. The church is the corpus of Christ, but it is not a dead, fictional corporation.

**The Pillar** (1 Timothy 9:15): The pillar was used to support an edifice as well as a public bulletin board. Each local church is a pillar of the truth, which upholds truth in this world. As a billboard, it proclaims the truth about Christ. The church is not "a pillar" of truth in contrast to Harvard or Yale, but the pillar of truth in contrast to religious claims. Truth is found in Christ amid the church, not in secular institutions or the books of philosophers.

**Lamp stands** (Revelation 1:20): The candlestick is Israel's most sacred symbol; yet, the church, not Israel, is the true candlestick. This imagery suggests that each local church is a lamp stand that sheds light on the Lord Jesus Christ. What other institution in Western civilization is dedicated to revealing Christ? Note that Israel's symbol is passed on to the church; i.e. the church is now the steward of Israel's most sacred icons.

**A Priesthood** (1 Peter 2:5-9): Ancient Israel had a priesthood, but the church is a priesthood that has access to God. As a priesthood, men are assisted in coming to know the King. As a *holy priesthood*, it offers up praise to God; as a *royal priesthood*, it represents God to men. As a priesthood, the church mediates God's gospel to men and helps men to gain access to God.

**Believers:** From the divine side the church is a fellowship of elect saints; from the human side it is a fellowship of decision-makers who have responded to the gospel. Membership in the old Israel consisted of circumcision and acceptance of the Law. Membership in the New Israel requires individual personal faith and confession of Christ as Lord (Romans 10:9).

**A chosen race** (1 Peter. 2:9): The church is a new humanity, a new creation of God. Equality prevails. In this race there is neither black nor white, male or female, rich or poor, slave or free. All our children of God and all bear his image. The emphasis in this verse is on "chosen," the idea of the privilege and honor of selection.

**Dr. Joe Temple** defined the church as "an institution over which the gates of hell shall not prevail."

**Mine:** The church is a fellowship of men who presently share in the spiritual blessings of the inaugurated kingdom.

### **THEOLOGICAL DEFINITIONS OF THE CHURCH**

In reading the literature, one will notice these distinctions:

**Universal Church:** The universal church is composed of true believers from Pentecost to the end of the age. The Church is not the sum total of its parts. The local assembly is not part of the church; rather, the local church is the church in its local expression.

**Invisible Church:** The invisible church is composed of all true believers on earth.

**Visible Church:** The visible Church is composed of all professing believers, whether true or false, that composes church organization here on earth.

**A Local Church:** A local church needs to be distinguished from other Christian organizations so as not to confuse the two. The following definition has been helpful:

*The local church is a gathering of believers in a local community with unlimited commitment to one another and to the responsibilities of a church as directed in the Word of God (Stockton).*

*A corporation is an artificial entity, a legal fiction, a creation of the State, regulated by the State, to serve the State.*

For example: Campus Crusade for Christ or Navigators is not a church nor have they accepted the responsibilities of a Church.

**A Mission:** A mission is a team of believers united together for a limited purpose for specific period of time. For example: Paul and Barnabas teamed up as a missionary team. They were sent by a church and established local churches, but they were not a traveling church.

**A Cult:** a cult is a gathering of people who either (a) deny or amend the gospel of Christ, and who (b) look to another authority outside of Scripture as the basis of their faith.

**A 501-c-3 organization:** This is a tax exempt organization that seeks privileges from the IRS and is under the authority of the Internal Revenue Service. The section in the Internal Revenue Service tax code that describes the criteria an organization has to meet in order to receive tax-exempt status is section 501(c)(3).. The organization may be charitable or religious, or it may be set up to promote common interests, such as the environment or global warming. One of the alleged advantages of being classified as a 501 c 3 is that donors can deduct their contributions from their income taxes. Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, the Masons, Wicca and the church of Satan and Evangelical churches are members of this association. Is something wrong here?

## **RELATIONSHIP OF THE CHURCH TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

The KOG (kingdom of God) exists today in the sense the part of the citizens of the kingdom are present on earth and are directed by the Lord from His highly exalted position in heaven, but the kingdom is not the church (Romans 14:17).

The kingdom is God's reign and the realm in which the blessing of His reign are experienced. The church is a fellowship of those who have experienced the redemption of Christ, and who enjoy the spiritual blessings of the kingdom (Ephesians 1:3). But, the church is not the kingdom.

The blessings have come in a "first fruits" way, and will come in their fullness when the kingdom comes in its fullness (Romans 8:18-25; 1 Peter 1:10-12). The spiritual blessings that await the righteous in the future kingdom have been thrust into this present age to experience now in a limited way in advance of the culmination of the kingdom. The full physical blessing will be manifested when Christ returns in the future.

The mystery of the church is that both Jews and Gentiles share on an equal basis the fruits of the future kingdom now. Christ secured kingdom blessings through His redemptive work (Ephesians 2:3).

*"The kingdom creates the church, works through the church, and is proclaimed by the Church. There can be no kingdom without a church, those who acknowledge Christ's rule,*

*and there can be no church without God's kingdom; but they remain two distinguishable concepts: The rule of God and the fellowship of men." (Ladd, 1959, p. 117)*

**Ladd** says the church is a witness to the ultimate victory of the KOG. The church is called to labor for the cause of the kingdom, but it is not the kingdom. It advances the kingdom through proclamation of the kingdom gospel, but it cannot build the kingdom or bring in the kingdom. The kingdom of God can only grow by the power of God (Mark 13:35-36; 2 Thessalonians 1:5).

While we make a distinction between Israel and the church as two separate entities, we hold to the idea that there are only one people of God.

## RELATIONSHIP OF THE CHURCH TO LAW

Mingling law and grace was a constant problem in the New Testament era and the people of God have had difficulty through the centuries defining their relationship between the Torah and the gospel.

The Law was composed of two parts: **the moral law**, direct reflections of God's character, and **cultic regulations**, shadows of His holiness. The moral law is a clear and accurate but incomplete representation of God's character (Psalm 119:142). The Law was limited in what it could do for man. It could tell a man what was right and it could tell a man what was wrong with his life, but it did **not** empower him to do what was right (Romans 7:10-14). The Law was a schoolmaster or tutor of Israel until the Living Torah appeared in history (Galatians 3:25-4:4).

Jesus is the **end (telos)** of the Law (Romans 10:4), that is, He is fulfilled the Law. This means He is the Living Torah, the perfect, subjective reflection of God's character. What the Law was to Israel, Jesus is to the church. Coming to Christ ends one's relationship to the Torah in the sense the Torah no longer acts as a mediator between God and man. The believing Jew died to the Law as a mediator between God and man (Romans 7) so that he might be *in-lawed* to Christ. Once "in Christ" the Jew is no longer under law as a mediator (Romans 6:11-14). His mediator is Christ (1 Timothy 2:5). "God sent forth his Son . . . to redeem (exagorazo)<sup>49</sup> them that were under the Law (Jews) that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:5).

When Paul addresses the law in Galatians 1-2, it is obvious that he includes Judaism with all its case law; that is, the problem of law in Galatians is not grace v. Torah, but grace v. Judaism.

The Gentile believer was never under the Levitical system of law, and the Jewish believer has been redeemed out from underneath the Legal Code. This deliverance from the system of the Law (Judaism) and union with grace creates a kind of death. When the Jew believes in Christ (Romans 7:5-8), he receives the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14), and he dies to law as a mediatorial Levitical system and Rabbanical case law (Romans 7:1-8).

The opposite of law is not grace, but lawlessness; and the opposite of grace is not law, but permissiveness.

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<sup>49</sup> *Exagorazo* means "to take out of the forum."

Grace contains law, but it does **not** contain salvation by law. Man is never free from God's law as the standard of moral behavior, but he is free from the mediatorial aspects of the law in the Levitical system as the means of approaching God. Just as salvation by law is a perversion of law, permissiveness (indulgence) is a perversion of grace.

There is all the difference in the world between being saved by law and being saved to keep the law.

In opposition to God's law is the law of man. There is only one Lawgiver (James 4:12). Congress is **not** a lawgiver. Congress is a statute developer. Law is from God; statutes are from man.

*The definition of the term LEGAL -- "the undoing of God's Law."*

*1893 Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, Encyclopedia Britannica; a dictionary of arts, sciences and general literature/ The R. S. Peale 9th 1893. God's Law is also known as "Natural Law," and Natural Law is the foundation for "Commercial Law," wherein, "the Truth bounds all contracts." Does the A.B.A., the I.B.A., or the D.O.J., then, promote & support the "undoing of God's Law"?*

The believer does not need the Levitical system or rabbinical case law to be holy: "Stand firm then, and do not let yourself be burdened again by a yoke of slavery (Judaistic legalism)," said Paul (Galatians 5:1ff).

Because Christ obeyed the Law, He fulfilled the law (for us, and on our behalf). Because it is fulfilled, justification is based on His obedience to the Law and not Christian merit. One need not walk by the light of the moon when the Sun is up. One need not go back to kindergarten once he has graduated from high school. The baby sitter is no longer needed once the parent has come home.

**The Spirit indwells the believer.** When he walks in the Spirit he will live out a life of obedience to the Law — not for justification but as an expression of sanctification (Romans 8:2). If a man obeys the law, his neighbors are safe. Love is defined as a life walking in obedience to God's moral law (Romans 13:10).

A relationship to Christ means that the Jewish believer's relationship to the Levitical system has been radically changed. The cultic laws of Israel (Judaism) must be abandoned as they hinder community. But, no man can abandon God's moral law because the moral law is absolute and eternal.

*Ephesians 2:15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;*

## **RELATIONSHIP OF THE CHURCH TO THE STATE**

***2 Corinthians 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbeliever (the government): for what fellowship hath righteousness (church) with unrighteousness (the state)? and what communion hath light (the church) with darkness (the state)?***

The relationship of the State to the church is a thorny issues of our time. While church has a duty to call the state to surrender to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, some teach, "It is the duty of the church to totally submit to government." Others assert "the church has no duty whatsoever to the State." There is more truth in the latter than the former.

In wrestling with the “Jewish Question” in Germany in 1933, Dietrich Bonhoeffer concluded the church could act in three ways toward the state: **first**, the church could question the state and help the state to arrange itself under God’s law order; **second**, the church could unconditionally aid the victims of the state—even to those who do not belong to the Christian community (Jews); and **third**, to not just bandage the victims of the government but to “put a spoke in the wheel” of the state; that is, seek to cripple a tyrannical regime. So radical was Bonhoeffer’s views about helping victims of the state, some ministers got up and walked out on his lecture (Metaxas, 2010, p. 153, 154).

Nowhere in Scripture does God order his church to surrender anything in its Biblical charter to the State. It does, however, exhort individual believers to cooperate with virtuous civil authorities (Romans 13:1ff). But, just as a church has a duty to submit to Christ for its purpose, *so the State has a duty to submit to Christ to fulfill its purpose*. The purpose of the State is to cleanse society of evildoers as God defines evildoers. The government to which the Christian has a duty to honor is one the one that is a terror to lawbreakers. Because states go awry so quickly, any allegiance to the state must be *cautious* and *limited*.

There are three God-ordained institutions: **the family** (the institution of education), **the state** (the institution of justice) and **the church** (the institution of mercy). Nowhere has God given the state a duty to educate men or to hand out welfare. But, the modern state seeks to be all things to all men including but not limited to being the educator of all citizens, the dispenser of order, justice, and protection, and the shepherd of grace and mercy in its welfare programs. The modern state *knows no limitations* and *is guilty of ultra vires acts*—radical overreaching of its God-ordained purpose. Such a condition demands that Christians “put a spoke in the wheel” of the government, and resist the gradual, subtle encroachments upon the family and the church.

Likewise, heads of families must accept God’s mandate for the family and refuse to surrender their children to government run educational programs steeped in evolutionary atheism. The Christian couple would do well to set their face like a flint to bring their children up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Romans 6:4). Likewise, the church must understand its authority and **refuse** to surrender **any** of its mission or authority to the state including but not limited to the right to marry people without a license, the right to pronounce God’s verdicts upon the sins of the State, and the right to be free of any government license, permit, statute, tax, duty or obligation.

The American Presbyterian Church stated the following:

*The American Presbyterian Church however rejects the notion that civil government ought to be secular or that it is some kind of social compact. With the Apostle Paul we affirm that civil magistrates are ministers of God. However **we believe that God has limited their authority to enforcing the second table of the law**. These are the very commandments that Paul quotes in his famous passage on civil government in Romans 13. We believe that civil government is an earthly ministry of justice established by God **to restrain sin and to punish sins** that men commit in their relationships to each other as regulated by the second table of the law. Similarly we believe that God has established the church, and raised up ecclesiastical elders, to enforce the first table of the law<sup>50</sup>, and to discipline men in matters of faith and worship.*

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<sup>50</sup> The First Table of Law are Commandments 1-4 in the Ten Commandments; the Second Table of Law is the last six Commandments of the Ten Commandments.

*We therefore believe in two divine institutions, with two separate sets of elders, enforcing respectively two different tables of the law (Civil Government, Retrieved 2011)*

The Baptist Faith and Message states:

*God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. **The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends.** In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. **The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work.** The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. **A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal,** and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power. (<http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp>).*

The modern church has little understanding of its authority or place in the world (Ephesians 1:18ff), and has voluntarily surrendered its authority, headship, property, and members to IRS statutes, codes, and regulations; and, county codes, statutes, and regulations (2 Corinthians 6:14ff). **It has volunteered to be a tax collector for "Caesar"** by sending in monthly reports, taxes, and forms. **Where in Scripture does God permit the church treasurer and deacons to act as a double agents?** Going to a state-church these days is as about as much fun as reading the obituary.

Foolishly, the church has entered into a contract with the secular, godless State and volunteered to be silent about government policies, errors, and sins. Like little girl dolls, the church is cute, but silent. That is, in becoming a 501 c 3 organization, the church has compromised the headship of Christ (Colossians 2:14-18), sinned against God by fornicating with the State (Revelation 17), shackled itself with chains and irons so that it no longer has the ability to speak for God on social issues. Little wonder our land is overrun with transvestites, pimps, prostitutes, abortionists, Sodomites, socialists, and money-hungry bankers.

The average American church is ignorant of politics and nuttier than a Christmas fruit cake. Until the church repents of its idolatrous, fornicating love affair with the godless, secular State, the land will continued to be plagued with feministic, terminal, moral decay (James 4:1ff).

God called the church to be His *mouthpiece*, His *prophet*, His *ambassador* to the world. The Lord called Israel His *battleax*; likewise, the church is His *battering-ram at the gates of hell* (Isaiah 51:20; Matthew 16:18). Wasn't it Paul's ambition to be a witness to Caesar? Instead of being God's Prophet, the church has become a non-prophet organization, a not-for-profit secular, 501 c 3 Corporation. Where do we find any authority in the NT for such a slithery association?

The Baptist Faith and Message (1999-2000) says,



*“A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.”*

But, the SBC churches are **not** only **not** free, they have gone mute, deaf, and dumb regarding the sins of the State. Only a handful of pastors dare to speak out on the issues of our time and SBC's status as a slave on the American plantation. The SBC solution has been to contract with the State, bow the knee to the State, and narrowed its mission to preaching to individuals in order to convert minds to Baptist Christianity.

**Neither** the Word of God or the Constitution permits the State to have any authority over the church—none, zilch, nada. The State cannot tax, control, admonish, request, demand, command, order, sanction, govern, or regulate God's church because of the restrictions of the First Amendment. What is it about the word “**no**” law in the First Amendment that Christians and legislators do not understand?

*Congress shall make **no law** respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*

Congress **cannot** pass a statute to govern the church; and in fact, Congress has never passed one law regulating the church!! But, it can pass laws, however, to regulate, control, sanction, punish, destroy, enslave, hinder, and regulate a 501 c 3 organization and its assets.

Congress has **not** made the church a slave to the U.S., Inc. *The church has enslaved itself out of ignorance.* By listening to lawyers whose duty is to “attorn” or “turn over property to the state,” the church has given the government authority over all its property, all its people, all its finances, and all its programming. Didn't Jesus have something to say about lawyers?

*Woe unto you, **lawyers!** for ye have taken away the key of knowledge (by changing the meaning of words; i.e. legalese): ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered (Luke 11:52).*

*Colossians 2:18-19 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels (or the secular State, U.S., Inc.), intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the **Head** (by surrendering the church, its people, and its property to the authority of the IRS ), from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God (Colossians 2:18-19) (Emphasis and insertions, mine).*

Not all lawyers are bad. The problem is that ninety-five percent of the lawyers in this country make the other five percent look like con artists. Because neither pastors or church boards or lawyers know the Word of God, lawyers have unwittingly compromised the headship of Christ and turned over God's flock to the Devil; i.e. to the all-seeing, all-knowing, all-controlling god-like State. **Is not this idolatry?** Ye adulterers and adulteresses, **know ye not** that the friendship (contract with) of the world (the secular State; U.S. Inc.) is **enmity** with God?” (James 4:4).

The church as a whole has lost its *snap, crackle, and pop*. Churches are filled with dead sea Christians who believe the State is a god—the source of all wisdom, morals, and ethics. Many of its leaders are morticians caring only for the expired. Lacking is a voice in the pulpit who can pronounce God's

judgments on cultural issues, man-made laws, and Scriptural violations by civil rulers. And, *if there is cloud in the pulpit, there will be a fog in the pew.*

*Judgment must begin at the house of God* (1 Peter 4:17). Until the church extricates itself from the benevolent tyranny of the State to recover its sovereignty and authority, the church will continue to be impotent; that is, it won't be able to out-mush the lead dog in the pack (the State).

## **IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH**

The Lord Jesus loves His church. Do we? His whole purpose for living and dying is summed up in love for His people (Ephesians 5:25-27). If the church is the object of His love, it ought to be the object of our love.

The church is the primary instrument of Christ in extending truth upon earth

*Matthew 18:18 I tell you the truth, whatever you bind<sup>51</sup> on earth will be bound<sup>52</sup> in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*

The individual church body is a pillar, the sole support of truth (1 Timothy 3:15). (Note the anarthrous nouns *church*, *pillar*, and *support* and the articular noun, "the truth.")

The church is necessary for life as a finger to the body, as child to a family, as a soldier to an army.

- What the body is to the finger, the church is to an individual Christian.
- What the family is to a child, the church is to an individual Christian.
- What an army is to a soldier, the church is to an individual Christian.

How does the world see Christ? The church is His body, the visible manifestation of the invisible Christ (Ephesians 1:19ff). What our bodies are to our soul, the church is to the Person of Christ.

The church is a lamp stand, an instrument of light to be shed on the Lord (Revelation 1:19-20). As the candlestick in the tabernacle shined light on the table of showbread (a type of Christ), the church illuminates the history of Christ as the "Bread of Life."

## **THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH**

*The purpose of the Church in relation to God:* It exists for the glory of God and is designed to reflect His attributes: (Ephesians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 10:31). It was created by God, for God, and is dependent on God. For this reason the church is called a *candlestick* (Revelation 1).

The church is a reflection of what the GRACE of God can do (Ephesians 2:4-9).

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<sup>51</sup> Aorist, active, subjunctive.

<sup>52</sup> Perfect, passive, participle.

The church is a reflection of the WISDOM of God (Ephesians 3:10).

*The purpose of the church in relation to the world:* Christ proclaimed the arrival of the kingdom of God in history and gathered disciples around Himself to bestow on them the blessing of the kingdom through faith. Out of this transient, traveling caravan of disciples, the church was formed. It became apparent that the church was to have more than a temporary place in history.

**As a pillar** (1 Timothy 3:16-17) the church is the sole means whereby God extends the truth in the world. As a public bulletin board, it proclaims the truth and it supports the truth.

**As His body** (Ephesians 1-3), the church represents Christ as the visible representation of the invisible Head. Christ is seen and made known to the world through the “arms” and “legs” of the church.

**As stars** (Philippians 2:14-15) the church acts as a guiding light to a dark, depraved, and twisted generation. Each local church shines like a star in the darkness of this age.

*The purpose of the church in the world:* As an institution, the church finds itself girded with the dual responsibilities of *edifying itself* (Ephesians 4:11ff) and *proclaiming* the Gospel to a lost world. The church is a learning center, a training camp, and an incubator for nurturing its members (Ephesians 4:11ff). Furthermore, the church is a public bulletin board that announces the gospel to the world (1 Timothy 3:15). The church has problems with immaturity, instability, and deception. But God gave the church gifted men to His body to aid in the maturation process.

### **MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHURCH**

The church is not the kingdom of God, but the kingdom of God creates the church. The blessings of the kingdom are possessed when the individuals embrace the kingdom, the King, and its rule. One becomes a member of the church by the Spirit's work of “placing” the believer into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). In one sense, one cannot join the church; they must be born into it.

- One has to acknowledge Christ (Matthew 9:35).
- One must have faith (Ephesians 2:8, 9).
- One must accept the yoke of Christ (Matthew 11:28-29).
- One must have a minimal commitment to the local church.

Practically, every truth should have a practical expression. What is true in heaven should be made true on earth. If one is truly a member of the universal church, they should belong to a local church. (But, how can a believer join a “church” today that is “double minded;” i.e. claims to be a church but in reality is a government 501 c 3 organization wherein its members, finances, and doctrine are subordinate to the State). The command to gather with the sheep does not mean one has to meet with the goats.

### **THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

Q:: What is the purpose of the church: to worship God, to evangelize the world, to edify itself?

1. To glorify God (Romans 15:6, 9).
  2. To edify itself (Colossians 2:7; Ephesians 4:12ff).
  3. To purify itself (Ephesians 5:26; John 15:2).
  4. To educate the community of believers (Ephesians 4:12).
  5. To evangelize lost to Christ (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 15:14).
  6. To act as a preservative in a decadent culture (Matthew 5:11ff; 2 Thessalonians 2).
- To promote the general good in society (Galatians 6:10).

## **FIVE SACRED SYMBOLS IN CHRISTIANITY**

Throughout the ages, pious Christians have honored five sacred symbols associated with Christianity.

### **THE CROSS:**

***“But far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.” – Galatians 6:14.***

The cross is the most sacred symbol of Christianity. The symbol is on every true church building as it represents the accomplishments of Christ for salvation. The cross surfaced as a **dogmatic symbol** adopted by all Christians during the church age to remind them of the Savior's accomplishments at Calvary and to prevent apostasy -- a worthy, honorable, wise praxis having the full support of our Lord.

***Matthew 18:18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.***

Traditionally, from earliest times, universal Catholics make the sign of the cross in prayer. Unfortunately, the Protestant Reformation throughout the “baby with the bathwater.” In this age of apostasy, mindful “protestant” Catholics would do well to restore the practice:

**Cruci dum spiro fido** – “As long as I breathe, I will remember the cross.”

### **BAPTISM**

From the first days of gospel proclamation (Acts 2) until now, Baptism is an act in which a Christian is immersed in water to symbolize the end of an old way of living, and the start of a new way of living – his being taken out of Adam and placed into the victorious history of Christ (Romans 6).

Whether it be by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling, all pious men are baptized as a symbol they have been placed into the history of Christ to share in His victories. This was not a temporary cultural practice but a dogmatic ordinance imposed on all Christians during the church age to prevent apostasy.

### **A WOMAN'S HEADCOVERINGS**

**2 Now I praise you, *brethren*, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.**

The verb "**keep**" (*atecho*) is an imperative the Corinthians obeyed. Paul commends the Corinthian flock for remembering him and for keeping the ordinances he delivered to them. It takes positive energy to incorporate a Biblical practice into the life of a community, and the Corinthians had a zeal to arrange themselves under the authority of God's Law-word and to obey it.

The word "**ordinance**" (*paradosis*), a cognate noun stemming from the verb "*paradidomi*." It refers to authoritative apostolic traditions established in the early church. In using the term "*ordinance*," the apostle is not referring to personal preferences or frivolous rituals or local Corinthian customs, but enduring practices applicable to all men for all time rooted in God's law. Geo-political Israel had their feasts and festivals to aid them in their worship of YHWH and the church has its ordinances to build up the people of God.

The verbal form of "**ordinance**" (*paradosis*), meaning a command, is used in verse 23 in reference to Paul establishing the Lord's Supper as an ordinance to be practiced in the church; that is, a Divine sanction to be honored by God's people when they come together as Christians to honor our Lord. **Baptism**, **communion**, and **headcoverings** (*katakalypto*) are **three dogmatic ordinances** delivered to the church to keep God's people true to the faith.

Failure to see the practice of headcoverings **as an ordinance** arising from Christian law has been the product of more than a little evil. Christians who neglect these warrants are more likely to violate the faith and slide into apostasy of feminism in the church.

Apparently, problems developed in the Corinthian community due to irregularities and objections to these ordinances. This was not a temporary cultural practice but a dogmatic ordinance imposed on all Christians during the church age to prevent apostasy.

**THE WOMEN'S HEADCOVERING**

***11:5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.***

***11:6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.***

***11:10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.***

***11:16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.***

This passage is about headship - the authority of Christ over the man; the authority of the man-husband over the woman. The requirement to surrender to both authorities.

The uncovered head of the man is a symbol that man is marvelously-made in the image of God and that Christ is the head of every man.

The headcovering (scarf or veil on the woman is a proclamation that God has a law-order; that she is under the authority over her husband (or father); that those gathered together in this place are here to focus on the glories of Christ and not the glory of man.

This passage is in the negative because it is the apostles' rebuke to women who come to church without a headcovering, and a rebuke to feckless men who are ignorant of God's law-order and who have not instructed their wives about humility, authority, and how to reverence God in a church service. Yes, this ordinance, though rebelled against by the modern antinomian, apostate-permissive man, is still required by Holy Scripture. This was **not** a temporary cultural practice but a dogmatic ordinance imposed on all Christians during the church age to prevent apostasy.

The "headcovering" was **not** a local custom of Corinthians but a practice in all the churches (11:16). You don't quote Genesis to support a local custom; but, you do quote Genesis when teaching a universal truth applicable to all men.

### **THE BREAD**

***11:23-24 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.***

The bread is a holy symbol of the body of Christ broken and bruised for us at Calvary; a precious icon of his vicarious suffering He endured to save men -- an icon which is sanctified (set apart) for religious services venerating the gospel of our Lord. All pious men remember the suffering of Christ and what it cost Him to redeem the souls of men on a weekly basis.

***10:16 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.***

The one loaf and our participation in taking a part of that bread is a proclamation that we being many, are one -- that we individually have put our trust in Christ . . . and, that we share together in the benefits of our Lord's redemptive work at the cross; that believers from different races, cultures, and backgrounds belong to His fold. This was not a temporary cultural practice but a dogmatic ordinance imposed on all Christians during the church age to prevent apostasy.

### **THE CUP**

***11:25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.***

The cup is a symbol of Christ's blood; the currency of the spirit-world; the price of redemption; the consideration paid in a new contract (testament) between God and man; the only currency accepted in Heaven; that is, our participation in the cup is a faith-statement that we claim the efficacy of the blood as the only means for forgiveness; for the discharge of our debt to God; for our eternal salvation.

***11:26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.***

"shew:" Christian participation in the bread and wine is a proclamation that the Lord's death was a redemptive act that saves sinners from their sins when they believe.

***10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?***

The "*cup of blessing*" (eulogia) is called a blessing because of what the wine represents -- the blood of Christ shed for our sins at Calvary (1 Peter 1:18-20). The blessing is that He shed his blood to redeem us from the penalty and power of sin. Because wine is red, it is a fitting symbol of the blood of Christ.

"*We bless*" means we set apart the cup (and the bread) for sacred use. We bless this "cup of blessing" because of what it signifies at Christian worship services. We "bless" means that we make prayers, says praises, and rehearse glorious liturgies while performing the duties associated with the holy sacrament.

*"Both Luke and Paul, in their account of the institution, express this part of the action by εὐχαριστήσας, having given thanks. And hence the service itself hath long borne the name of the Eucharist, or thanksgiving, by way of eminence" (Benson)*

Taking the cup is sometimes called the "*Eucharist*." The term "*eucharist*" means "giving thanks." It is appropriate to call this "sacred meal" the "Eucharist" because Christians are thankful for what it represents . . . But in so doing **we must separate it from "Roman Catholic Theology"** which teaches more than the Scripture permits -- that the wine and bread are mystically transformed into the actual body and blood of the Lord. The Roman Catholic doctrine of the "eucharist" empowers "priests," but this misinformation corrupts the truth about salvation to the injury of many.

The "*cup of blessing*" is not the literal blood of Christ! It is the "communion of the blood of Christ;" that is, it represent the believers communion (koinonia) with the Lord.

Drinking the "*cup of blessing*" is a personal statement that the worshiper is a participant in the benefits of the accomplishment of Christ at the cross; and, there is a holy, mystical, spiritual fellowship (communion) taking place between the living Christ and the worshiper when he participates in the "*breaking of the bread*."

This mystical blessing is not due to a magical quality of the bread or wine, but due to **the remembrance of Christ** (11:24-25) which the symbols invoke; that is, these symbols provoke sweet reflections about the Savior which are always a blessing to the worshiper.

Let us remember that participating in all of these symbols are essential for a healthy perspective about life and salvation. They are the practice of pious men (Acts 2:42). These were not temporary cultural practices but dogmatic ordinances imposed on all Christians during the church age to prevent apostasy.



## THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM

**Baptism:** The church is called to baptize new converts (Matthew 18:19-20). It practiced this rite in the early church (Acts 2:41; 8:12; 9:18; 10:47; 16:15; 16:33; 18:8; 19:5).

**The meaning of baptism:** There are several different kinds of baptism in the NT such as John's baptism (Matthew 3), the baptism of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13), and believer's baptism. The one we are concerned with here is *believer's baptism*.

There are two non-contradictory views about the meaning of believer's baptism: (a) Baptism is a statement of faith about one's identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Romans

6:2-5); and (b) a statement about one's personal salvation (Romans 10:9). When one is baptized, he makes a public statement that he believes in the history of Christ (Acts 16:31; Romans 6:3-4). In reference to salvation, believer's baptism is understood as sign, symbol, or statement that one has entered into a covenant with God and been sprinkled with salvic blessing associated with the kingdom of God (Ephesians 1:3-7; Ephesians 4:1-7; 2 Corinthians 3; Colossians 2:11-15).

**The mode of baptism:** Those who take the *historical view* usually baptize people by *immersion* because it is an excellent symbol of death, burial, and resurrection. *Water baptism*, however, must be distinguished from *spiritual baptism*, the act whereby the Spirit takes the believer out of Adam and places him into the history of Christ (Romans 6:2-5; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

In reference to the *covenant view*, ministers *sprinkle* new converts as a symbol that they have placed their trust in Christ and come under the salvic blessings of the new covenant, the Holy Spirit and other eschatological gifts belonging to the age to come (Ephesians 1:2-7; 4:1-4).

Moreover, many Reformed churches liken infant baptism to circumcision; that as the circumcised grew up and believed unto salvation that those baptized as infants must grow up and embrace the faith.

**Baptism as a symbol:** Baptism is a symbolic expression of a spiritual reality. It functions more like a wedding ring that is a symbol of marriage rather than the actual act of marriage itself.

**Necessity of Baptism:** Baptism does not save the soul. It is not necessary for salvation. But, it may be indicative of salvation. A minister of the gospel has a right to question the validity of one professing faith in Christ that has not obeyed Jesus' command to be baptized.

**Baptism is not a requirement of salvation.** In John's gospel and in his letter of 1 John which were written for the sole purpose that men may know they have eternal life (John 20:21; 1 John 5:11-13), baptism is neither commanded nor stated as a requirement to have eternal life. Remember, John was the closest disciple to Christ and the expert on what Jesus' required for salvation. John mentions "believe" ninety-one (91) times in his gospel as a requirement for salvation. Not once does he mention baptism as a requirement. If he did not include baptism as a requirement for eternal life, then it is not necessary for salvation. Though it is not a requirement for salvation, it is a requirement of obedience. New believers should obey the Lord as soon as they understand the requirement.

Baptism is usually considered a "sacrament." A sacrament refers to a rite in which God participates. While the importance of baptism should not be minimalized, it is difficult to declare baptism a holy "sacrament" since it is not repeated, or treated as a subject like the Eucharist.



## THE ORDINANCE OF HEADCOVERINGS

There are three ordinances of the church in 1 Corinthians: *Baptism, Headcoverings, and the Lord's Supper*.

There are three subjects in 1 Corinthians 11: *Headship, Headcovering, and Head Remembering*.

There are three symbols in 1 Corinthians 11: *Headcovering, the Bread, and the*



*Wine.*

There are three disciplines in 1 Corinthians: *Shunning* (5:11), *Shorning* (11:6), and *Sickness* (11:30).

The wearing of fabric head coverings in worship was universally the practice of Christian women until the twentieth century; that is, women wearing headcoverings in church is a church ordinance.

What happened? Did we suddenly find some biblical truth to which the saints for thousands of years were blind? Or were our biblical views of women gradually eroded by the modern feminist movement that has infiltrated the Church...? - R.C. Sproul

***1 Corinthians 11:4-5 Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying, disgraces his head. But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved.***

It has been a tradition for men to remove their hats during prayer and for women to wear a headcovering during prayer since the conception of Christianity.

Christian art is dominated by women adorning themselves with a veil or scarf.



Among the Amish, Mennonites, and Plymouth Brethren, and some Presbyterian and Baptist churches, the practice still continues.

All of these groups have a high view of Scripture and their people are known for their piety. In the major denominations, men still remove their hats in church, but unfortunately, the wearing of the veil by women has been abrogated by compromised Christianity.

There are several reasons why modern women do not cover their heads in prayer.

**First**, the American church is very much a product of the culture. Around 1960 the practice of women covering their heads in prayer shifted. In the age of movie stars and the inauguration of skin magazines, everything came off. Bikinis were in! Feminism burst on the scene and women were propagandized into the cult of arrogance.

By the time the mini-skirt rage hit the pop culture (1966), headcoverings all but disappeared in the church.

**Second**, the rise of feminism influenced theology and modern churchmen culturalized the practice teaching that headcovering was just a local Corinthian problem wherein the early church did not want their women to look like temple prostitutes.

But, the trend to culturalize uncomfortable parts of Scripture has infected the church to such an extent that even homosexuality, a Biblical abomination, is being accepted by churchmen. Following the cultural argument, why not culturalize baptism, the Lord's Supper, the cross, and blood atonement?

**Third**, we are living in a day of apostasy. Few Christians read the Bible. Fewer still study the Scripture and believe in the principle of "sola Scriptura." Even the principle of male headship in the home and the

duty of a woman to obey her husband seems like an alien dogma to modern Americans. Feminism conquered alpha males.

**Fourth**, women spend a great deal of time preparing to go to church and which one of them wants to mess up their hair by wearing a veil? But, instead of pleasing men, woman would do better to figure out what pleases God . . . and, wearing a veil pleases the Lord.

**Fifth**, as the world has defined "freedom" to do anything you please, the church as a whole plunged into antinomianism. Churches have become lawless. Preaching the law of God is seen as legalistic, stogy, and pontifical. In such a climate, men faithful to the Word may find themselves out on a limb all alone preaching to squirrels and chipmunks.

Let's look at Paul's argument:

Paul calls the church to imitate him as he imitates Christ (11:1).

The topic of this chapter is headship (11:1-2), head coverings (11:3-16), and Head remembering (11:17ff). Three symbols are venerated in this chapter: the veil, the bread, and the cup of wine.

Paul advances an ancient truth, the hierarchy of authority: God, Christ, man, woman. This chain of command appears to be a solid, biblical, unchanging order related to Adam and the headship of the man in the family (Genesis 3:16).

[Note, the **first law** in Torah after the fall is that the woman shall be under the authority of the man.]

**Paul exhorts men to remove any head apparel in worship and for women to cover their heads ("something down the head" like a scarf or veil) for the following reasons:**

**(1) Headship (11:1-4):** The grand subject of this section is authority. God, Christ, man, and woman form the chain of command. *Headcoverings are a sign of a women's obedience to God and acceptance of His law-order.*

The wearing of a veil is a symbol of the Christ's. authority over man, man's authority over the woman, and that she is under her husband's coverture. The practice of a woman covering her head is a visible, object lesson that God created man to be the head and protector of his home and a woman to be his "helpmeet."

**(2) Shame (11:5-6):** Paul taught that if a man prays while having his head covered (*kata keppalas ekon*) having something down the head like a tallit or prayer shawl, he disgraces his head. The term "his head" appears to be a reference to Christ. A man who will not remove his hat during prayer, like the pope, shames the Lord Jesus Christ; and, is saying: "May no one ever never see Christ in church as He is not worth honoring."

Likewise, a woman who prays uncovered (*akatakalupto*), shames her head. It is not clear whether Paul is saying that an uncovered woman embarrasses herself or her husband. Since the context is headship and authority, I assume an unveiled woman shames her husband and disregards God's chain of command -- a rebellious failure to acknowledge God's law-order (Genesis 3:16).

Paul is emphatic! Every woman praying without something “down the head” expresses contempt for God’s law-order and reproaches her husband. Thus, we conclude **it is the duty of every man to instruct his wife about God's law-order and her duty to veil herself.**

If a woman will not cover her hair, she was to be sheared that she might emotionally feel the shame of praying while uncovered.

An uncovered woman was like the *hetairai*, the temple prostitutes in Corinth and the adulteress who was punished by having to shave her own head (Numbers 5:18). A shaved head is a universal stigma among women. So universally shameful is a bald woman, a shaven woman would be forced to wear a veil until her hair grew out again--a hard way to learn this lesson in that day!

Thus, shearing was the discipline for the rebellious woman.

**(3) Theology (11:7):** The reason given for the practice of veiling was theological. Removing a covering from the head of a male was a statement announcing the glory of God. When men remove their hats they proclaim, “May the glory of God be seen in this place.”

When a woman covers her head, she is making a statement, “May the glory of man be concealed in this place so the glory of God may be made known.” “May God be honored here, and not men . . . or women!” This is consistent with our Lord’s prayer, “glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you” (John 17:1).

When a woman approaches God, she does so while graciously recognizing the role that He created for her. The veil is a statement that the Christian woman accepts her husband’s authority (or father’s authority) over her. The whole idea of a unisex approach to God is foreign to Scripture -- a product of an alien law-order. He made us male and female and each has an ordained approach to God in worship.

**(4) Creative Order and Purpose (11:8):** The practice of hat removal and head covering recognizes God’s created order and purpose. It teaches the ignorant about the order of creation, that man was created first and that woman was created second. Man (adam) was the head of the family—the woman his helpmeet. A woman’s practice of covering her head is a symbolic statement that proclaims the creative order and the purpose of the sexes--that woman was created for the man, not the man for the woman.

Sexual differences are not the result of the fall, but the product of creation and God’s law-order for the home. To prove the validity of the practice, Paul uses Biblical authority from Genesis. If wearing a headcovering was merely a cultural practice, Paul would not have appealed to the “Big Guns” in Torah to fortify a local custom. It would be inappropriate for any man to use the heavy artillery of the Law to support a temporal fad or a passing fashion.

Paul adds in this verse even the truth of the universal dependence of the sexes on each other lest any male should drift into arrogance and pride. *Headcovering is about order, not superiority!* Both men and women of faith are declared to be children of God (John 1:10-13).

**(5) Education (11:10):** Apparently, angels take a great interest in headcoverings. In Isaiah six, we notice that seraphim covered their faces and their feet with their wings in the presence of the thrice holy God. Holy things are often covered. The tabernacle and the veiling of the face of Moses come to mind.

Paul says the headcoverings educate angels about authority; i.e., angels are instructed in why Christ died for men instead of angels. Our Lord died, not because he was a martyr, but because He was obedient to

His heavenly Father. His submission to the Father demanded a death-walk to the cross. Furthermore, the headcovering instructs angels that their Lord died for sinful men who were made in the image of God and that he did not die for fallen angels who are mere servants of the Most High. When women cover their heads, they model our Lord's submission to His heavenly father—a wonderment to the angels.

**(6) Propriety (11:13):** Paul appeals to the Corinthian sense of propriety for the continuance of this practice. The custom of women veiling in prayer was so common in the churches, Paul could appeal to this tradition as a matter of orthodoxy—an honorable tradition in the early church.



Apparently, the practice of headcovering was a matter of apostolic authority with such established tradition in the church that it was not open to debate. The Christian position is more liberal than the Jewish tradition where women veiled even their faces, but more conservative than the libertine Corinthians where women paraded in public unveiled.

The Jewish tradition today for men in a synagogue to wear a yamaka is the exact opposite of Christian teaching<sup>[1]</sup>.

Messianic communities that endure the practice of men wearing a yarmaka (or Catholic bishops) are taking their cue from modern unbelieving Jews rather than from the blessed teaching of Rabbi Paul, the bondservant of the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, veiled men join the rebellion of antichrists!



**(7) Nature (11:14):** Paul appeals to nature for the continuance of the symbolic practice of a women's headcovering. Men tend toward baldness. Long hair on women is a universal standard of beauty. Nature tells us that Christ is the head of man, and that women are the glory of man. Paul reasons that if a woman's long hair is given to her for a natural covering, she should be inclined to wear a spiritual covering ("something down the head") like a veil or scarf.

Paul is **not** saying that long hair is a substitute for a veil nor is he condemning a shorter hair style in public fashions. *He appeals to natural law as a reason to practice the spiritual law.* The whole idea that long hair is a symbol of submission is ludicrous and something even libertarians will not accept.

Wearing a headcovering is consistent with nature because it is a spiritual sign pointing to the natural order of the original creation.

**(8) Unity (11:15-16):** Paul argues that the churches of his day practiced the custom of veiling, and he urges the Corinthians to adopt the same common tradition. Failure to comply exposed a contentious spirit; i.e., rebellion against God's law-order. His purpose of mentioning the term "contentious" was meant to cut off the debate. A woman who attends church without a veil shows contempt for God's law-order! Selah!

Out of all the reasons given to practice the tradition of headcovering *not one was cultural.*

In fact, Paul appealed to the principles in the OT to persuade these believers to accept the practice of veiling. Apostles do not appeal to the OT Scriptures to invoke a temporal, cultural practice. To speculate that Paul was addressing a local, petty cultural problem at Corinth is to invoke a rationale foreign to the

reasons Paul himself gives in this chapter. Furthermore, we would not only put words in the Apostle's mouth that is not there, we would ignore the reasons that are there.

An argument from silence is null and void.

The ancient practice of hat removal by men and wearing headcovering by women does not appear to have any practical value. The practice is iconic or symbolic of the Divine order for humanity. Since man is made in the image of God (icon), men are to imitate God. Women, on the other hand, are NOT the icon of man but the glory of man.

Women have no duty to emulate man or to accumulate masculine traits. In fact, they are forbidden to do so.

The practice of wearing a veil has been abandoned by many modern churches, but it has not been disregarded by Western Civilization even though most have no idea why they practice hat removing and hair covering. In going to football games or public events where prayer is offered, most men will remove their hats and helmets, and most women, if they have something on their head, let it remain. Isn't it ironic that the pagans honor the tradition while many churches have generally abandoned the Biblical practice?

The greater problem is not women, but Christian men who are either ignorant of the doctrine of head coverings or refusing to take a stand on head covering because they are living permissively in rebellion against God's law-order.

Let's look at what the church fathers had to say:

**Irenaeus** (120-202 AD): Irenaeus translates 1 Corinthians 11:10 as follows:

*"A woman ought to have a veil [kalumma] upon her head, because of the angels." (Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book 1, 8:2, cited in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, A. Cleveland Cox, ed., (U.S.A: The Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), I:327. )*

**Tertullian** (150-225 AD) discussed whether the command for a woman to wear a veil applied to virgins. This discussion would not have occurred if headcoverings were not a common practice among the churches. Tertullian, On Prayer, cited in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, A. Cleveland Cox, ed., (U.S. A.: The Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), III:687.

**Clement of Alexandria** (153-217 AD): Clement understands the words in 1 Corinthians 11:5 to refer to a veil of fabric and not to a woman's hair.

*"And she will never fall, who puts before her eyes modesty, and her shawl; nor will she invite another to fall into sin by uncovering her face. For this is the wish of the Word, since it is becoming for her to pray veiled" [1 Corinthians 11:5 GLP]. (Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor, cited in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, A. Cleveland Cox, ed., (U.S.A: The Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), II:290.).*

**Jerome** (345-429 AD):

*"It is usual in the monasteries of Egypt and Syria for virgins and widows who have vowed themselves to God and have renounced the world and have trodden under foot its pleasures, to ask the mothers of their communities to cut their hair; not that afterwards they go about*

*with heads uncovered in defiance of the apostles command" [1 Corinthians 11:5]. (Jerome, Letter CXLVII:5, cited in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Philip Schaff, ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co.), VI:292. 13. Augustine, Of the Work of Monks, cited in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Philip Schaff, ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co.), III:523.*

**Augustine (354-430 AD):**

*"We ought not therefore so to understand that made in the image of the Supreme Trinity, that is, in the image of God, as that same image should be understood to be in three human beings; especially when the apostle says that the man is the image of God, and on that account removes the covering from his head, which he warns the woman to use, speaking thus: 'For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man.'" Jerome, Letter CXLVII:5, cited in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Philip Schaff, ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co.), VI:292. 13. Augustine, Of the Work of Monks, cited in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Philip Schaff, ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co.), III:158. (347-407)*

**Chrysostom on (1 Corinthians. 11:3):**

*"The head of woman is man," compares God in his universal regiment to a king sitting in his royal majesty, to whom all his subjects, commanded to give homage and obedience, appear before him, bearing every one such a badge and cognizance of dignity and honour as he has given to them; which if they despise and condemn, then do they dishonour their king. "Even so," says he, "ought man and woman to appear before God, bearing the ensigns of the condition which they have received of him. Man has received a certain glory and dignity above the woman; and therefore ought he to appear before his high Majesty bearing the sign of his honour, having no cover upon his head, to witness that in earth man has no head." Beware Chrysostom what you say! You shall be reputed a traitor if Englishmen hear you, for they must have my sovereign lady and mistress; and Scotland has drunken also the enchantment and venom of Circe 5)let it be so to their own shame and confusion. 6)*

**Martin Luther (1483-1546):**

On January 15th 1525, Martin Luther preached a message on marriage. In his sermon he said this:

*Women, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife" [Eph 5:22-23]. Again to the Colossians in the third chapter [3:18]. Because of this, the wife has not been created out of the head, so that she shall not rule over her husband, but be subject and obedient to him.*

For that reason the wife wears a headdress, that is, the veil on her head, as St. Paul writes in 1. Corinthians in the second chapter, that she is not free but under obedience to her husband. 1)

**John Calvin (1509-1564):**

*"When he says 'her hair is for a covering [1 Corinthians 11:15 GLP],' he does not mean that as long as a woman has hair, that should be enough for her. He rather teaches that our Lord*

*is giving a directive that He desires to have observed and maintained. If a woman has long hair, this is equivalent to saying to her, 'Use your headcovering, use your hat, use your hood; do not expose yourself in that way!' (Seth Skolnitsky, trans., Men, Women and Order in the Church: Three*

*Sermons by John Calvin, (Dallas, TX: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1992), p. 53)*

**John Knox (1505-1572 AD):**

***"First, I say, the woman in her greatest perfection was made to serve and obey man, not to rule and command him. As saint Paule doth reason in these wordes: 'Man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. And man was created for the cause of the woman, but the woman for the cause of man; and therefore ought the woman to have a power upon her head,' (that is, a coverture in signe of subjection)." (John Knox, "The First Blast Of The Trumpet Against The Monstrous Regiment Of Women," Works of John Knox, David Laing, ed. (Edinburgh: Printed For The Bannatyne Club), IV:377.) (Emphasis mine)***

**Matthew Henry (in his Commentary on the Whole Bible, published in 1706)**

*"The woman, on the other hand, who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head [1 Corinthians 11:5-6 GLP], namely, the man, v.3. She appears in the dress of her superior, and throws off the token of her subjection. She might, with equal decency, cut her hair short, or cut it close, which was the custom of the man in that age. This would be in a manner to declare that she was desirous of changing sexes, a manifest affectation of that superiority which God had conferred on the other sex." Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co.), VI:561.*

**A.T. Robertson (Word Pictures ~1931):**

*". . . it is the sign of authority of the man over the woman. The veil on the woman's head is the symbol of the authority that the man with the uncovered head has over her [1 Corinthians 11:10]." A.T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1931), IV:162.*

**J. Vernon McGee (1904-1990):**

*"Apparently some of the women in the church at Corinth were saying, 'All things are lawful for me, therefore, I won't cover my head.' Paul says this should not be done because the veil is a mark of subjection." Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee, (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983), V:50.*

I can't help but think one of the reasons we are facing so many cultural problems in the family due to liberalism and the rise of feminism. Consequently, the Christian church has dropped the symbolic practice of men removing hats during prayer and women veiling themselves during prayer.[2]

Isn't neglect of God's law-order at the root of so many problems in the family? Today, people do not understand God's creative order or his purpose for the sexes . . . or that there are ONLY two sexes. It is next to impossible to tell the difference between the godly and the ungodly, between men and women,

between right and wrong not only by dress but by demeanor. Feminism wages war against gender roles and confusion reigns. The whole idea that a person can choose his sexual identity is to proclaim that man is a god with his own law-order.

Though I am persuaded the practice has solid validity, I have come to realize that the casual church does not have the wherewithal to practice these truths; nor does the average Christian husband have enough rope on his bucket to dip into this well of truth taught in this chapter. Christians who are as shallow as a puddle on the sidewalk do not have the spiritual maturity to accept the ABC's of Christian doctrine.

A preacher who preaches the truth with any conviction will ruffle feathers, and may find themselves pecked out of the hen house; moreover, a woman who practices veiling may find herself scratching for grain alone under the porch.

Some teach it best to put this passage in the category of “doubtful things” (Romans 14) and leave the matter up to the individual conscience. But even this is apostasy. There is nothing doubtful about the command for a woman to veil her head.

The Apostle emphatically states, “if any man seem to be contentious (resistant to the practice of veiling), we have no such custom, neither the churches of God!” That is if anyone does not recognize this practice, he should not be recognized as a true Christian in the church of God! Such a person is not taking the Word of God seriously -- the attitude of apostates.

In conclusion, this passage declares three truths: headship, headcoverings, and Head remembering. The godly woman is exhorted to cover her head as a statement of God's law-order.

[1] **Jeff Raskin**, 1990, describes rather humorously the origin of the yarmulke tradition in his History of the Yarmulke (<http://humane.sourceforge.net/humor/yarmulke.html>). He says, it is not known when Jewish men began to wear the yarmulke. It is not rooted in ancient tradition, and apparently is a rather recent invention. It took ten men to make up a synagogue, and sometimes, Jewish men would gather outside under the Sun to pray where the balder men would get sunburned. At first, these men would pray under an umbrella to keep from burning themselves. Later, bald men, started wearing a skull cap to protect themselves. Somewhere after the sunburn and the umbrella, the rabbis of rabbis rejected the umbrella as sacrilegious and sanctioned the yarmulke as an approved form of sunburn protection. The common practice evolved into a standard liturgical worship apparel among Jews. Tradition!

[2] I was in an outdoor football stadium after 9/11 where the whole crowd of 35,000 observed a minute of silence. The men removed their hats, and the women kept their hats on. Interestingly, the culture seemed to retain this tradition while the church has not

## THE ORDINANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER



The Last Supper took place during the Passover meal the night before the Lord was crucified. The Lord took the middle *matza* and declared that this was his body broken for us. Following this, Jesus took the third cup, the cup of redemption, and infused it with new meaning (Luke 22:20). Since then, the bulky Passover ceremony was dropped. Christians retained the simple essence of the Passover by regularly celebrating the Lord's Supper and



reflecting on its true meaning—Christ our Passover and His accomplishments at Calvary.

**The authority of the Lord's Supper:** “*for I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you . . .*” (1 Corinthians 11:23). Christ instituted the Lord's Supper for the benefit of His people. The word “Lord” is mentioned seven times in Paul's account indicating that the Lord's Supper was not instituted by men, but by the Lord Jesus Christ.

**The historical practice of the Lord's Supper:** Originally, Christians came together to fellowship and enjoyed a full meal together in remembrance of Christ. These became known as “Agape Feasts” or “Love Feasts.” These simple feasts continued in parts of the world for about 400 hundred years. Eventually, the Lord's Supper became more liturgical and formal as Christianity was adopted as the official religion in the Roman Empire.

**The meaning of the Lord's Supper:** Christians have not been in agreement as to the meaning and significance of the Lord's Supper.

*Roman Catholics* adopted a view known as *transubstantiation*. Traditionally, this view holds that the bread and the wine are infused by the presence of Christ to mystically become the actual body and blood of the Savior. According to this tradition, the cup and the bread take on salvific significance.

*Lutherans* accepted a similar view of the Lord's Supper called *consubstantiation*. Lutherans assert that the bread and wine are not the actual body and blood of Christ as in Catholicism, but that the bread and wine are actually *infused with the presence of Christ* in its administration. Lutherans understand the Lord's Supper to be a means of God mediating grace from heaven to earth through the instruments of bread and wine. Grace comes from the presence of Christ in the elements.

*Baptists* and *Presbyterians* and those of like faith take a *symbolic view* of the Lord's Supper and understand the bread and wine to be symbols of the body and blood of Christ. Grace comes, not because of some mystical presence of Christ in the elements, but because of the sweet thoughts about Christ that are stirred when reflecting on the Lord and His accomplishments at Calvary. As Israel was delivered from bondage in Egypt, Christians are delivered from slavery to sin through the exodus wrought by our New Moses, the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Meaning of the symbols:** The bread is a symbol of the body of Christ. If God could have forgiven sin apart from the death of his son, He would have done so. Because He was a man with a real human body He could truly represent us and suffer on our behalf (Hebrews 10:10). The wine is a symbol of the blood of Christ. It is Jesus' death, not his life, that saves and redeems men from sin (Hebrews 13:12).

### **THE PURPOSE OF THE SUPPER**

- It is a proclamation of the historical death of Christ: “you do show the Lord's death till He come.” (1 Corinthians 11:26).
- It is a proclamation of the meaning of his death: “this is my body which is broken for you.”
- It is a proclamation of the individual's participation in the death of Christ: “Is it not the communion of the body of Christ.” Eating and drinking is more than a memory of past events, it involves participation in the body and blood of Christ (10:21). Furthermore, since judgment is connected with unworthy participation, God is somehow present in this rite in a unique and wonderful manner.

- It is a proclamation that all believers co-share in the accomplished work of Christ and are therefore one body: “for we are all partakers of that one bread.”
- It is a proclamation of the believer’s devotion to Christ: “Let a man examine himself and so let him eat.”
- It is a proclamation of the Lord’s return: “You do show the Lord’s death till He come.”
- It is a proclamation of judgment to come: Paul says believers are judged if they partake of the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner. Thus, we have an eschatological judgment breaking in on the Lord’s Supper. Since the Lord took our sins, and was judged in our stead, we have a proclamation of judgment in regards to the Eschaton.

**Jesus gave this order:** “*Do this in remembrance of me . . .*” The Lord’s Supper is **not** a memorial, but a remembrance service where affectionate hearts recall and reflect on the beauty of Another. Jesus did not ask his disciples to set up a memorial, a one-time act. Rather, He requested that his disciples “remember” Him. Remembrance is much more precious than a monument. The Lord’s Supper is a time to remember His wonderful name (Song of Solomon 5:10, 16), to remember his redemptive work (1 Chronicles 16:12), to remember his suffering for us (1 Peter 2:22-24; Lamentations 3:19), to remember His love (1 John 4:19; John 15:8-13), to remember His glorification (Ephesians 1:22-23; Revelation 1:10ff), to remember His mercies (Romans 3:24-8:34), to remember His words and teaching (Acts 20:35; Colossians 3:16) and to remember His promise to come again (John 14:1-3).

The Lord’s Supper is primarily a worship service designed to reflect, thank, and remember the Savior for Who He is and what He accomplished for us at Calvary. Due to these sweet reflections, grace comes to our hearts.

**Participants in the Lord’s Supper:** Christians have taken one of two courses in relationship to the feast: (a) open communion, or (b) closed communion. The issue arises in part because of the church’s understanding of the purpose of the Lord’s Supper, and in part because of one’s understanding of where Judas was located during the time the Lord infused the third cup with meaning. Most scholars believe Judas was absent during the Lord’s instruction about the matter.

**The Importance of the Lord’s Supper:** **First**, it is important to the Father that we remember His gift to the world (John 3:16). This gave His only begotten Son. **Second**, it is important to the Son. As Lord, He commanded it (John 14:21). As a friend, He requested it (John 13:14). As a dying man, it was his passionate plea (Luke 22:15). **Third**, it is important to the Spirit. The Son is the joy and delight of the Spirit. When Christians remember Christ, they are fulfilling the purpose for which the Spirit created them (Psalm 45:1-3). **Fourth**, it is important to the church. It is one of four disciplines practiced by the early church (Acts 2:42; 20:7). The church is energized and renewed as it reflects on the glories of the Savior.

**Figure 11: Difference between the Lord’s Supper and the Lord’s Table:**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>The Lord’s Table</p> <p>1 Corinthians 10:21ff</p> | <p>The Lord’s Supper</p> <p>1 Corinthians 11:17ff</p> |
|--|---|

#### PILLAR FOUR: THE EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S HISTORY ON THE BELIEVER

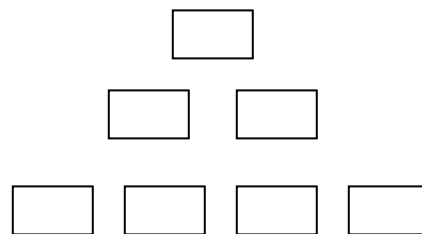
|   |  |
|---|--|
| Its location is in heaven                           | Its location is on earth                                 |
| It is a heaven's salvation feast—a feast for kings. | It is earth's humble supper—a feast for pilgrims.        |
| It is a permanent enjoyment of salvation            | It is a temporal celebration of Christ's accomplishments |
| All believers will be there                         | Only a few believers are present                         |
| None are absent                                     | Some are absent  |
| The table is the essence of salvation               | The Supper is a symbol of great things to come           |
| Believers will be one                               | There is some disunity                                   |
| The Table is perfection                             | The Supper is imperfect                                  |
| Christ will be seen in his perfection               | Christ is seen by faith                                  |
| There is no judgment at the Table                   | There is judgment at the Supper                          |
| It is reality that will be experienced              | It is a remembrance service designed to stir the mind.   |
| Participation is conversion to Christ               | Participation is by obedience                            |
| There is no judgment to those justified by Christ   | Believers can be judged for sanctification               |
| By grace we will be there                           | We receive grace by being at the Lord's Supper.          |

There is a “*cup of demons*” -- a witch’s brew full toe nails, frog’s tails, and cat’s eyes which the modern Christian would do well to avoid. Observe the contrast between the **Lord’s Table and the Table of Demons** (1 Corinthians 10:21) where we have a powerful disparity between good and evil, righteousness and wickedness, Christ and Satan, faith and flesh, Biblical doctrine and Satanic deception, truth and fraud: Among the counterfeits of our time there are phony gifts, fake faith-healers, psychic prophets, new-age practices, psycho heresy, unholy laughter, Sophia worship, gay clergy, matriarchal leadership in the church, devotion to the state, gender neutral Bibles, pornography, much of the entertainment industry, ecumenical movements, catholic celibacy, mysticism, magic, and the entertainment church.

## THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

The NT is not such much concerned with organizational methods as it is with ethical behavior of its members. Paul established elder-pastors in each of the churches he planted, but very little is iterated about how those churches conducted themselves (Acts 14:23). Generally speaking, when problem arose, Paul addressed his letters to the churches, not to the church leaders themselves. Traditionally, churches are organized according to three patterns:

**Episcopalian:** These churches have a pastor that is responsible to a regional director in a structural hierarchy with authority stemming from top to bottom. The strength of this structure is unity, organization, control, and powerful programs. The weakness of this structure is that when the hierarchy errors, the error spreads like gangrene to all the congregations.



**Presbyterian:** These churches usually have a pastor and a board of elected elders who represent the body on a ministry board. Elder groups vary as to the purpose and their authority. Some boards are strictly advisory, other boards make decisions for the body, and yet others become instruments of shepherding. The strength of this system is accountability and shared responsibility. The weakness of this system is that men tend to protect their own power in elder groups. Elder led churches tend to descend to the lowest common denominator, the collective weakness of the elder team, and to the preferences and faith of the least spiritual among them. Elder teams or deacon teams are notorious for church politics, schisms, divisions, and power plays. But, it is worse among “democratic” Baptist churches.

**Congregational:** These churches have a pastor, but they practice some form of democracy giving each member a voice in the direction of the church. The strength of this system is that individual members can take ownership of the church. The weakness of this system is that carnal Christians can out vote, out shout, and out politic godly members; that is, they can easily over rule a godly pastor’s leadership. More pastors lose their positions in congregational churches for faithfulness to God’s Word, than for any other reason (Rushdoony).

The strength and weaknesses of these structures are beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say there is no perfect structure. Structure can hinder growth, but even a model structure cannot produce life without the Spirit of the Lord.

## **LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH**

**Pastors:** The word “*pastor*” is only found one time in the Bible (Jeremiah 17:16). The word “pastors” is used eight times in the Bible and only once in the New Testament. The term *pastor* is translated “*shepherd*” at least seventeen times. Jesus is called a “*shepherd*” (John 10: 1 Peter 2:25).

***Ephesians 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.***

Pastoring does not appear to be a spiritual gift. Rather, a pastor is a man, and it is the man who is the gift to a church. Because this word is connected with “teacher” some have supposed that God’s gift is a pastor-teacher<sup>53</sup>. However, not all pastors are good teachers, and not all gifted teachers are competent pastors. *All pastors are men and **not** females.* There is **no** such thing as a female pastor in the Bible. And the rise of female pastors in modern times is not progress, but digress. Rabbis thought it was better to burn the Torah than commit its care to women.

**The office of pastor** (presbu,teroj) is identical with an elder in the New Testament church, but applications will vary depending on denominational polity.

The term “*elder*” (presbu,teroj, presbyteros) is used eight times in connection with the epistles. Five times it refers to the office of an elder, and three times to the age of a person. The term “*elders*” is used thirty-five times, and in the majority of cases it appears as a body of men committed to the church in an oversight position. But, it is better to have one godly pastor than ten carnal elders.

The word “*bishop*” (evpi,skopon, episcopos) is a related word and it is used four times in the epistles. It means to “inspect, to overlook, to visit, and to oversee.”

The term “*elder*” refers to the age of a man as well as *the spiritual maturity of God’s leader*. The word “*bishop*” (episcopos) refers to the man’s work, the task of shepherding God’s people<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> The two plural nouns, pastors and teachers, are governed by one article, the article *tous* (tou.j de. poime,naj kai. didaska,louj()).

<sup>54</sup> Except when referring to individual duty and character, the word *elder* is always used in the plural. This has led some to believe that every Church should have a board of elders, or a plurality of leadership. There is a blessing and a curse about a plurality of elders. Someone has said that “God so loved the world, he did not send a committee.” The strength of an elder team is in its solidarity and balance. The weakness of plural leadership is in its practice. A concentration of power in a few can lead to political power struggles and inefficiency in decision-making. In seeking to resolve church problems, Paul did not write to elders, but to the whole church (Pauline Epistles). In my opinion, if a church chooses to be governed by elders, the board’s role must be limited to concerns of pastoral care or to some advisory capacity. Members should rotate off the board over the years. A board that sets policies, makes ministry decisions, shepherds, teaches, administers, and leads in ministry is doomed for failure. A board like this has too much power and will eventually become an oligarchy. The church as a whole must have a say-so in where it is headed, and staff must have the power to make daily ministry decisions.

**Deacons:** The word “deacon” is *diakonos* in the Greek and it simply means "servant." The noun *diakonia* means “service or administration” (1 Corinthians 12:5; 11 Corinthians 9:12), and the verb *diakoneo* means “to serve.”

There are different types of service in the New Testament: domestic (Luke 4:39; Luke 10:40), general servants (Luke 22:27, John 12:26, Romans 13:3-4), and special ministry servants (Romans 15:25; 2 Corinthians 8:3-4, 1 Corinthians 12:5). Servants of the church can be male or female. Both are needed. Serving is pre-eminent in Biblical thinking: Christ was a servant (Isaiah 42:1-6). Serving is Christ-like (Mark 10:45). Serving is a spiritual gift (Romans 12:6-7). Serving is a ministry (Romans 16:15; Ephesians 4:12). And, serving is a special office in the church (1 Timothy 3:8; Acts 6:1-6).

Many are called *deacons*, *ministers* and *servants* in the New Testament: Jesus (Mark 10:45), Paul (Acts 20:24; 1 Timothy 1:12), Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21), Epaphras (Colossians 1:7, 23, 25), and some in the Philippian Church (Philippians 1:1-2).

The first deacons were selected in Acts six. Greek widows were being neglected in the *diakoneo* of food. The apostles gave priority to the *diakonia* of the Word. Seven men were chosen to rectify the problem. These men were spiritual men and they were undoubtedly Greek Jews. This was a temporary ministry designed to relieve an immediate crisis. Though we would like to know more, very little else is said in the New Testament about the ministry of deacons. It appears that the church has great flexibility as to the assignment of services and duties. Duties appear to be determined by the need in the local body of believers.

**Deaconess:** The ministry of deaconesses in the church is a legitimate ministry. The word "*wife*" in 1 Timothy chapter three should appear as "*women*." It is not referring to the wife of a deacon, but to the feminine form of *diakonos*. It would have been confusing to repeat the term *diakonos*. So, Paul chose the term “*gunaikas*” which refers to “*women*” *in service*. In service, women serve the body and not rule over it.

The word “*likewise*” refers back to the office of a deacon. If Christ came to serve, it is logical that women would also be given gifts of service and places to serve in the church. Though women are forbidden to exercise authority over men in teaching, they are **not** forbidden to administrate ministries in the church. And, to the credit of these godly sisters, ministries seem to prosper under their care.

In this modern age, wherein our entire culture has been feminized, the church is being pressured to accept the ordination of women as pastors and deaconesses. **This unscriptural trend is weakening the church and must be resisted and put out of business . . . not** because women are not needed in the service of Christ, or because they are not capable of teaching, **but because God's Word forbids it!**

Paul's commands were “*commandments of the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 14:37). That is, God's wants men to lead His people. We are in a war and we press upon the Gates of Hell. No war has been won without men! Where men lead, the church has strength; where women lead, the men are servile and weak. In a church where men lead, women are strong and the church is strong. In a Biblical church, women are free to be what God calls them to be and to do only what women can do—that is, teach younger women their Christian duties (Titus 2:3-5). Women have a duty to teach women and children which is about two-thirds of the church. Men must disciple men. Men can teach men and women; men should not disciple women and women should not disciple men. Period! End of story! When women lead, male leadership is

weakened and emasculated, and women transgress their calling. Every church having a female pastor needs to repent!

Every women pastor in America needs to resign and find an appropriate ministry to women and children if they are qualified to do so.

*The Word of God proclaims, "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent" (1 Timothy 2:11-12). In the church, God assigns different roles to men and women. This is a result of the way mankind was created and the way in which sin entered the world (2 Timothy 2:13-14). God, through the apostle Paul, restricts women from serving in roles of teaching and/or having spiritual authority over men. This precludes women from serving as pastors, which definitely includes preaching to, teaching, and having spiritual authority over men (Got Questions.org.)*

The essential difference between an elder and a deacon is **not** one of character, but maturity in God's Word. An elder, if he is to feed the flock, must know the Bible and have the ability to teach the Word of God. He must be a student, a scholar, and a teacher. Deacons can teach, should study, and must hold to sound doctrine, but the ability to teach is not a prerequisite for holding the office of a deacon.

### **QUALIFICATION OF A PASTOR-ELDER**

***1 Timothy 3:1ff This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.***

Paul prefaces his treatise on qualifications of elders with a maxim: "*This is a faithful saying;*" that is, what follows has complete integrity and is totally acceptable by all men.

On the table is the concern about appointing qualified elders to the work of oversight. The word "*bishop*" (evpiskoph,, *episkope*) means "*to oversee*" and it refers to the work of a shepherd. The word "*elder*" refers to his spiritual maturity. The need is for qualified men to oversee the work of the ministry in a local church.

The desire among Christian men to be an elder is a noble ambition. The word, "*desire*" (ovre,getai, oregetai) means "*to stretch forth the hand in order to grasp,*" and it is in the middle voice. The middle voice infers the man is actively cultivating this aspiration. The man who pursues this ambition seeks a praiseworthy task because shepherding God's people is an honorable ambition. He need **not** go to seminary, but he must know what seminarians know!

***"A bishop then must be blameless . . . "***

The word, "*blameless*" (avnepi,lhmpton) denotes being "above reproach" or "to be out of reach" of common law violations; that is, a man free of criminal charges. He should not be accused of hurting people or defrauding others of their property. He is a Ten Commandments kind of man—a man that can be trusted. It does not mean that an elder is morally flawless nor does it refer to someone who is lily-white in reference to statutory dominion. Even Paul had to flee from the clutches of ultra vires operations of civil rulers (Acts 9). Paul, himself, was accused of breaking "Caesar's laws" on many occasions (Acts 17:1-7). At least a third of the Book of Acts is about Paul's legal troubles. There is no such thing as a good Christian leader who does not have conflicts with the nonsense laws of governments. Being blameless implies the man is man of integrity in reference to the Law of God—not necessarily the

arbitrary laws of autonomous man. "Blameless" does not infer the man has never sinned since becoming a Christian or that he hasn't had his share of life's troubles. This rule simply means the man has dealt with his errors responsibly and is presently living a godly life.

*"the husband of one wife . . . "*

Paul is not addressing marital status (married vs. unmarried). Marriage neither commends nor impedes one's relationship to God. Rather, he is scrutinizing the character of the man and his relationship to women. It was not uncommon for Romans and Greeks to have a legal wife, a concubine, and a favorite prostitute. By using the word "*one*" (*mia/j*), Paul scratches bigamists off the list of candidates, and by using the phrase, "one woman man," he eliminates womanizers. Selection of a pastor must come from the rank and file of loyal, devoted husbands. If he is married, he must be intensely loyal to one woman. A man with a divided heart is an unsuitable model for the Christian church. Further, a wife who doesn't feel her husband's love may be an indication the man is not qualified for service.

An immediate qualification of a pastor is **that the office must be filled by a man, a male** (3:2). To infer that this passage applies to women with one husband stretches the inspired Word to include an application never intended by the Holy Spirit. Beware of women who take "women's studies" in Bible school as the curriculum is usually aimed at undermining male leadership in the home and in the church.

Invariably, the question arises: "Can a single man be an elder?" The answer is "yes," if he meets the qualifications. Paul is not commanding men to be married. Neither marriage nor singleness is a virtue in Biblical thinking (See 1 Corinthians 7). Rather, it is a man's faith and his faithfulness that qualifies him for service.

Another question must be answered: "Can a man with a divorce in his past become a pastor?" The phrase "husband of one wife" (*mia/j gunaiko.j a;ndra*) has been painfully troublesome to interpreters. Consequently, many good, qualified men have been unnecessarily rejected from pursuing church leadership positions by the nonfeasance of interpretation. A past divorce may indeed disqualify some men from serving as a pastor, but this should not be so in every case. It is not the rule. Consider the following:

*The grammatical argument:* The word "*one*" (*mia/j*) is emphatic, and the word "*woman*" (*gunaiko.j*) attributes a character quality to the man. The phrase actually means, "*one-woman man*." The interpretation that a pastor must be a "one-woman man" who is intensely devoted to his present wife is solidly supported textually.

*The argument of character:* By using the phrase "*one-woman man*" Paul puts "*woman*" in the attributive position referring to the character of the man. Pastoral ministry should not be an issue of marital status, but of character and integrity.

*The argument of grace:* A man who is happily married, but was divorced before he became a Christian should not be disqualified any more than a man who was a drunk, fornicator, or idolater in his former life should be disqualified. Otherwise, we would have few men from which to choose. Interpreters must never forget Paul's words, ". . . of such were some of you . . ." (1 Corinthians 6:9-12). The blood of Christ cleanses, and the presence of the Holy Spirit empowers. To disqualify a man because of a failed relationship in the past denies the sufficiency of grace. If Paul, a murderer, the chief of sinners "*received mercy*" (1 Corinthians 4:1) and became an apostle, surely, His grace has a place for a divorcee who have repented and found forgiveness at the foot of the cross.



***. . . vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality . . . "***

The word "*vigilant*" (nhfa,lion, nephaleos) means to be "wineless" or "temperate." Today, we could add "drugs" to the list.

The word "*sober*" (sw,frona, sophona) teaches men to be "self-controlled" and "in command of one's senses."

The word "*good behavior*" (ko,smion, kosmion) means "well behaved, dignified, or respectable." God's man must be free from the influence of wine and other controlling substances. He should be a man who is mentally balanced, discreet, and sensible.

The term "*hospitality*" (filo,xenon) can be translated "a lover of strangers." In NT times, travelers stayed in people's homes rather than in motels. A bishop has to love people and keep the hinges on his front door oiled. A recluse would not be good shepherd.

***" . . . apt to teach . . . "***

This phrase addresses one's knowledge<sup>55</sup> of the Word of God and the ability to communicate the great truths of the faith. It implies that a pastor has a gift of teaching<sup>56</sup> or the skill of preaching. It infers that he is a diligent student of God's Word, and who can communicate doctrine with clarity, accuracy, and conviction.<sup>57</sup> Having a *gift of gab* or occupying a position as professional teacher in the work place does **not** mean the man is a gifted teacher by the Spirit. Some people can talk up a storm and never communicate truth in way that inspires others to dig into God's Word. Paul told Titus that an elder must "*hold fast*" to the Word; that is, he must be a man who believes in the sufficiency of Scripture and one who is not swept away by current philosophies and winds of doctrine. Only through the Word can churches grow and be protected from the corruption of a decadent society.

***. . . Not given to wine . . . "***

Wine has been the undoing of many a man. Whiskey is the Devil's brew. An elder must be free from the love of alcohol, intoxicating habits, and drug abuses of any kind (mh. pa,roinon: drunkard). This does not mean wine must never touch his lips, but it does imply a conservative approach regarding the pleasures of this life. It takes little strength to reject the worst the world has to offer, but it takes grace to renounce the best the world has to offer.

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<sup>55</sup> Knowledge of God's Word is a prerequisite for pastoral leadership. Because the Romans were filled with knowledge, they were able to admonish one another (Romans 15:13). The pastor must excel in the knowledge of the Scriptures as well as the ability to communicate the truths of Scripture.

<sup>56</sup> Being able to talk does not qualify as a gift of teaching. A "good talker" is not the same as "good teacher." Having a teaching position in an educational institution does not mean a person has a gift of teaching. A gifted teacher motivates and inspires others to know God's Word because of the teacher's (a) exegetical insights, and (b) because of his command of the Greek, Hebrew, and English language. Some men have knowledge but lack communication skills, others have great communication skills but lack knowledge and a teaching gift.

<sup>57</sup> A man who wants to be a bishop should seek to expand his knowledge in the following disciplines: Old Testament Books, New Testament Books, OT theology, NT theology, Greek, Hebrew, systematic theology, philosophy, church history, archaeology, law, public speaking, and the sciences.

**" . . . not a striker . . . "**

The word "*striker*" (mh. plh,kthn) means, "ready for a blow." The imagery suggests a fighter who is ill-tempered, emotionally-charged, pugnacious, stubborn, and eager to quarrel. Though a true elder will be called on to contend for the faith and to wage war against lawbreakers (Jude 3), a contentious nature is undesirable in a shepherd of God's flock.

**" . . . not greedy of filthy lucre . . . "**

The word "*greedy*" or "*covetous*" (avfila,rguron) condemns the presence of an unrestrained love for money. It implies the willingness to steal or defraud another for the sake of gain. The term does not infer a pastor cannot value money or conduct a legitimate business in a community in order to acquire wealth, but it does imply that he does so honestly and that he does not defraud others in order to make a profit. The elder must guard not only the ends to wealth, but the means to wealth creation.

Furthermore, in light of the modern day business climate of "religious organizations," shame on the preacher who relies on the counsel of BAR attorneys working for the Queen, or turns God's church into a business, or a "non-profit" corporation, or marketing center for capital gains, or an uncompensated tax collector for the IRS, or an accounting service for government employees.

**". . . but patient, not a brawler, not covetous . . . "**

The word "*but*" (avlla.) is a strong adversative and *separates* at the same time it *connects*. In contrast to immoral desire for money, quick temperedness, and consumption is the word "*patient*" (evpieikh/) which could be translated "moderate, balanced, or gentle." God's man must be in control of his desires and wants and exercise "*sweet reasonableness*." Unrestrained desire leads to sin. Furthermore, he cannot be a "*brawler*" (a; Macon: without contention or pugnacity). A "*brawler*" is invincible. A fighter feels he must always win, always be right, and always triumph. God's man must have the ability to compromise preferences without compromising principle. He is cordial, agreeable, ready to unite, gentle, and conciliatory.

*Unity is greater than preferences.*

*Conscience is greater than unity.*

*Truth is greater than conscience.*

**"One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)"**

The word "*ruleth*" (proi?sta,menon) is a present middle participle meaning "*leading*" or "*managing*." Very few political jobs demand an orderly family as a pre-requisite for leadership. Just look at Congress. When a man is considered as a pastor, the church must review his family life. No such qualification is required of civil rulers. Of concern is the management of his household. If a man cannot manage his home so that its members are happy and holy, how can he conduct the affairs of the church? Governing a church is more like running a family than it is a business. The church must stop looking for entrepreneurs, and start looking for fathers. Therefore, his children must be in "*subjection*;" that is, they must be obedient to their father while in his home and not accused of riotous living (Titus 3:6). A pastor should have dutiful, teachable, and respectful children who are not wasteful and rebellious. However, he cannot be expected to control adult children with families of their own after they leave his home.

The passage in Titus in the NASB appears to imply that his children must be believers when it says, "having children who believe" (te,kna e;cwn pista,). Perhaps a better word than "believing" would be "faithful" (Titus 1:6).

The words, "having believing/faithful children" (Titus 1:6) have been a subject of debate. Does the phrase imply a pastor's children be believers, or does it require that his children live in happy submission to their father? Students are divided. However, there are three reasons why the latter is preferred.

- *The grammatical argument:* According to some grammarians the word "pista" is rendered in the passive sense requiring obedience rather than "faith." It is translated "faithful" consistently in Scripture (Titus 1:9, Titus 3:8; 1 Timothy 3:1; Matthew 24:45; Luke 16:10; Colossians 1:2)
- *The contextual argument:* The phrase, "not accused of riot or unruly," qualifies the preceding statement inferring that Titus was to observe behavior rather than scrutinize faith.
- *The logical argument:* To say that a pastor's children have to be "born again" is to make the man responsible for an act of God. Only God can save children. Likewise, if this were the intent of the passage, then every pastor with a newborn in the family would be forced to resign because his child lacks saving faith.

While the church should hold up a high standard, it should **not** employ an impossible standard for its leaders. **Christian law does not demand impossibilities.** To do so not only discourages men, it robs the church of valuable leadership.

**"... not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil..."**

The word "novice" (mh. neo,futon(, neophyte) screens out new converts. Converts need to be under teaching not over the teaching. Young and energetic young bucks may seek control of the herd, but their zeal must be resisted. When looking for elders, Timothy was to search among the veterans of the faith. New believers, though often very zealous, are less perceptive to the pitfalls of the Devil. Overseeing requires maturity more than it does motion.

**"Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil..."**

Not only is an elder to live respectfully among the Christian community, he is to live honorably among those outside the church. This is a test of genuineness, sincerity, and consistency. It is imperative that an overseer possess a *good reputation* (marturi,an kalh.n). He must have an orderly, upright, respectable life in the community (outside the church). These qualifications extend to a man's business affairs leading us to the conclusion that a man must be known as hard worker and an honest man. However, this does **not** exclude men like **the black regiment pastors** who confronted State tyranny.

Even Paul was charged as criminal, arraigned, condemned, and punished: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck" (2 Corinthians 11:24-25).

Many churches today are looking for chocolate coated, gum drop pastors to lead them into antiseptic Christianity rather than seeking the tried and true, bruised and battered soldiers of the cross. God is not requesting that his pastors have more sugar than maple syrup, wear white gloves, and never get into the

trenches and fight for truth. This is **not** a request that all pagans, Zionists, liberals, pornographers, and politicians speak well of the man. The Jews never spoke well of Jesus or Paul. God's man will have political enemies. Simply put, *God doesn't want profane men to lead His people.*

Two warnings are in order when considering men for spiritual leadership. First, there is the problem of compromising God's standards. Desperation for leadership can drive churches to receive unqualified men into positions of leadership. It would be better to have a humble, growing leader than an unqualified person in a pastoral position in a church. Second, in an attempt to insure quality, many have raised the bar for leadership so high that no man, except Jesus, would qualify as a pastor. Raising the criterion to impossible heights does not insure quality any more than raising the high jump bar to ten feet produces ten-foot high jumpers. Grace should be applied and churchmen must make room for less than perfect pastors.

If a man desires the work of a shepherd, he possesses a noble ambition. He does not have to be perfect to embark on this task, but he does have to have his sights set on Christ and the virtue He represents. This list of virtues should be the aim and goal of every man, especially those who aspire to oversee the affairs of the church.

## THE PASTOR SEARCH

From the Chairman of the Deacons

Date: 62 A.D.

To the Deacon Board of First Church:

As you know, our search committee has been trying to locate a pastor for our 501 (c) 3 organization -- a pastor of whom we can be proud—a man who can preach, teach, write, sing, lead music, administrate, visit, pray, evangelize, tell jokes, cook, counsel the hurting, and pet the sheep.

On my trip to Macedonia, I met a preacher who wants to establish a church in our area and he asked about the opportunities. I did not know what to say. Please advise me as to how I should answer.

He is a short man in his sixties who was raised a Jew, but he converted to Christianity while in his mid-thirties. He has a speech impediment and a loathsome eye disease. His astounding resume' includes three missionary tours. Some say he is one of the greatest Christians of our time, but I'm not too sure about that. Though he has been instrumental in establishing over 25 churches, he has split many synagogues in the area.

The man is opinionated and controversial. Sometimes he refuses to take money for his preaching, and supports himself through his blue-collar craft. Some say he is a negative man because he preaches against circumcision. Some say the man is a heretic because he preaches against the law as a means to salvation. The vegetarians were angered because he said they were no longer under the law, and the Greeks were disturbed because he rebuked them for eating ham sandwiches in front of the Jews at a church potluck. Everywhere he goes there seems to be trouble. The man has been arrested, flogged, imprisoned, put in stocks, and stoned. By the scars on his back, it looks like he has received 39 stripes on more than one occasion. Early in his life, he was a fugitive from King Aretas having been lowered over the wall in a

large fruit basket by non-compliant Christians. He is obviously not submissive to civil authorities. While he was incarcerated in Philippi, He refused to yield his constitutional rights, and the Mayor of Philippi had to escort him out of the city personally. Even Felix and Festus imprisoned him for creating a riot in Jerusalem. The talk around town is that Caesar is likely to indict him for treason against the state. The Macedonians said he preached against Socrates and Plato. Many were offended because he said Jesus is the only way God. He even insinuated other religions are wrong. He is not only politically incorrect, he preaches against psychologists, same-sex unions, and women's right to choose. He seems to have difficulty in getting along with others. The Galatian churches do not want him back, and highly-esteemed Demas will not have anything to do with the man. He and Barnabas argued in Antioch over a missionary candidate. One wonders about his relational skills! After all, if a man can't get along with Barnabas, who can he get along with?

Please advise me what to do. The man is insistent on coming to our area. His name is Paul the Apostle, sent not from men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father.

The Deac

P.S. A messenger from Corinth just arrived and reported that the brethren were disturbed by Paul's authoritarian approach to handling a young man who just married his father's widow. Maybe we should ask Demas to be our pastor. He obeys the government, and he is a man of means. I know we would be proud to have him as our pastor.

## MALE AND FEMALE ROLES IN THE CHURCH

The whole world seems confused about gender. Feminist Supreme Court report they don't know how to define male or female. Gender-bender confusion abounds.

*Kari MacRae tweeted, "I feel bad for parents nowadays. You have to be able to explain the birds & the bees . . . The bees & the bees . . . The birds & the birds . . . The birds that used to be bees . . . The bees that used to be birds . . . The birds that look like bees . . . Plus bees that look like birds but still got a stinger!!!"*

With monkeys in charge of the zoo, it of little wonder the church can't understand the difference between male and female roles in the ministry.

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There is not a church in America that can afford to lose the ministry of our precious Christian-sisters. These amazing women help with our Sunday schools, mission projects, and service organizations. Their gifts, excellence, and attention to detail make the church work. We are forever indebted to these dedicated women. But, there is a limit to their authority, as with all authority. They are not permitted to teach the entire congregation.

To gain perspective, it is important to possess an accurate understanding of 1 Timothy 2:8-15.

Timothy was commissioned by the Apostle Paul to stay in Ephesus to put the affairs of the church in order (1:5-10; 3:15, 16), to expel false teachers (1, 4), to ordain elders and deacons (3), to establish ethical

standards (3, 4, 5, 6), and to adjust the care of widows (5). One of the issues Paul addressed was the role of males and females in the church (2:8-15). The context is, “that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God” (3:15).

***2:8 I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.***

The word “*I will*” (*bou,lomai*) does not refer to Paul’s personal feelings, preferences, or desires. “I will” refers to God’s will by virtue of Paul’s commission to be a preacher, apostle, and a teacher of the faith among the nations (2:7). In other words, his instruction to Timothy is ordained by the will of God through Paul’s apostolic authority. They are the “commandments of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:37).

The word “*therefore*” (*ou=n*) refers back to Paul’s earlier instructions that prayer be the main priority of the church (2:1-5).

The word “*men*” is **not** “*anthropos*” but “*andros*” (*a;ndraj*). The word “*anthropos*” is a generic term referring to all mankind which includes men and women. But, the word “*andros*” refers exclusively to the male population in the church; i.e. to men or males. Paul instructs the church to appoint qualified males to lead the church in public prayer. Women are excluded from this duty. But, so are many of the men. Not just any man is qualified to pray. Paul **restricts** the duty of prayer to **qualified men**.

There are four qualifications for leadership in public prayer:

- First, the duty to lead in prayer is assigned to men (not women);
- Second, the duty of prayer is limited to holy men (lifting up holy hands);
- Third, the duty of prayer is limited to happy men (without anger); and
- Fourth, the duty of prayer is limited to men of faith (without doubting). The word “doubting” is the Greek word “*dialogismou*.” It means to “slice through” or “to speak through,” or “to slice through an argument.” We get our term “dialog” from this word. In this context, Paul eliminates contentious, dubious men from praying.

When it comes to prayer, women are **not** exhorted, encouraged, or commanded to lead the congregation in prayer. That duty falls to men, but not just any men. Those who lead the congregation in prayer must be holy, happy, and hopeful.

***2:9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; {broided: or, plaited} 2:10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.***

The phrase, “*In like manner*” (*w`sau,tws*), is an adverb modifying the main verb in verse eight, “I will” (*Bou,lomai*). Paul is **not** saying, “Just as I want men to pray, I want women to pray.” Rather, Paul is saying, “Just as I have instructions for the men in the church, I also have instructions for the women in the church.”

The infinitive “*to adorn*” (*kosmei/n/*) should be immediately connected to the main verb “*I will*” in verse 8: “*I will (2:8) that women adorn themselves (2:9) . . .*” The word “*adorn*” (*kosmi,w|*) means “to arrange or to adorn.” We get the word “*cosmos*” and “*cosmopolitan*” from this term. Woman in every age have

been concerned about how they look in public. He is **not** telling the women “to dress down” or not be concerned about their dress. He is telling them *to adorn themselves appropriately*. By using the word “*apparel*” (katastolh/|), Paul instructs woman about their external vestments. The word “*apparel*” is modified by the Greek adjective (*kosmi,w|*) which is related to the infinitive “to adorn” (*kosmei/n*). It should be translated “*respectable*.” Women are to wear appropriate, feminine, respectable apparel in church . . . and all activities. Orthodox churches require women to wear long sleeve blouses and a headcovering.

Two genitives (*of* in English) follow defining what Paul means by respectable. The first word “*shamefacedness*” (*aivdou/j*) is a noun meaning “*modest*.” *Modesty* is the opposite of “*sexy*” or “*revealing*.” The phrase “*not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments*” addresses the opposite challenge of deportment and that is fashion extravagance. God wants women to dress nicely but **not** “fit to kill.”<sup>58</sup> Clothing fashions is very much a theological issue. People dress according to their religious beliefs whether those beliefs be right or wrong. Dressing in gray like a mummy from head to toe, or transgender clothing, or unisex dressing wherein a woman looks like a man is **not** appropriate dress.

The second word “*propriety*” (*swfrosu,nh*) expresses the apostle’s concern about the woman’s attitude about dress. It can be translated “*sobriety*” or “*self-control*,” and it refers to the internal, orderly arrangement of a woman’s mental and emotional state.

The term “*good works/deeds*” identifies a godly woman’s behavior. Paul is concerned about the *kosmos* of the **outer woman** (modest dress), and the *kosmos* of the **inner woman** (propriety), and her **public behavior** (good works). Real beauty (godliness) begins in the heart (propriety), projects itself in physical appearance (adornment), and expresses itself by good deeds (behavior).

Paul is **not** exhorting Christian-women to “dress down” or to hide their femininity, but to arrange themselves appropriately as a godly woman in the assembly of the church. When attending a public assembly of God’s people, women should adorn themselves respectfully and modestly, i.e. they are to be appropriately covered, not “under dressed” (*without* modesty) or “overdressed” (*with* gold and pearl-braided hair and costly clothing). Because male attraction to the opposite sex has a long established historic tradition, “*dressing way up*” or “*dressing way down*” can take the focus off Christ and place it where it does not belong -- on women as women.

This instruction is for those “*who profess godliness*” and demonstrate it by their good works. The context of application is the church, **not** the workplace. How a woman dresses at work, or in recreation, may be different than how she dresses in a public meeting of the church. But, even here she should seek to dress appropriately for the occasion.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Younger women are often oblivious to the effects dress has on men, or in the business world, or on their testimony for Christ. The changes in dress style from the roaring twenties to the skin revealing fashions of modern times needs little comment. It is the duty of older women to teach younger women how to dress (Titus 2). Older women must instruct younger women how to be modest, but not drab and old fashioned; to be lady-like and feminine without being risqué and seductive. Nudity in the garden of Eden was the beginning of history, not the goal of history.

<sup>59</sup> Dress is much more complicated today than it was in Paul’s time because of so many varied activities in which this population is involved: sports, school, play clothes, skiing, business, parties, conferences, swimming, etc. The key word is *appropriate*. T-

**Application:** It is required that all theology flesh itself out in practice. It is not enough to teach about modesty. It must be applied. Appropriate attire must be identified and embraced. Inappropriate attire must be identified and rejected; that is, decisions about what clothing is applicable in church must be made by church leadership: shorts, tank tops, pajamas, sweat pants, see-through attire, etc. *Sloppy dress* reflects sloppy theology. *Casual dress* reflect casual Christianity. A preacher will never get into trouble teaching the principle of modesty. That is safe! Friction occurs and sparks fly when the preacher names fashions that are improper for Christians. Those that identify certain fashions as inappropriate for public deportment will be called “old-fuddy duddies,” “legalists,” “being judgmental,” and other names. But, **practical decisions about tasteless dress must be made** because modern people appear to be clueless about dress and what is suitable for public worship. We come to worship the King, and, therefore, short shorts, shorts, tank tops, see-through attire, sweat pants, t-shirts and the like are completely inappropriate for Christian women AND MEN! Dress to please the king! Remember, dress is a reflection of your theology whether it is right or wrong! That is, dress “sharp!” The King is among us! (See how Israel was required to dress in their finest when appearing before Him in Exodus 19.)

***2:11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.***

Paul continues his instructions on how men and women ought to behave in the church. The word “*learn*” (*manqane,tw*) is a present, active, imperative verb implying continuous durative action, and should be translated, “Let a woman learn in . . .” We get the word “*disciple*” from the noun form of this word. Church should be a place of instruction about the gospel (1:10) and about Scripture (4:15). Women are to assume the role of a *disciple* in the church of Christ.

The phrases “*in silence*” and “*in subjection*” are prepositional phrases describing either the environment of her learning or the instrument of learning.

Women are to learn “*in silence*” (*h`suci,a*). The word means just what it says, “*silence*” or “*quietness*.” A person with their mouth open and ears shut are not students. In Paul’s defense (Acts 22:22) before the crowd at Jerusalem, the crowd became *quiet* (*h`suci,an*) when they heard Paul speak in Hebrew. In other words, Paul wants women to be quiet like this crowd when the pastor speaks.

Women are also to learn “*in all subjection*.” The word “*subjection*” (*u`potagh*) is a military term meaning “to arrange oneself under a superior.” Though the context is not military service, the thought is discerning, agape submission to pastoral leadership. The adjective “*all*” (*pa,sh|*) defines “*subjection*,” that is, there are no exceptions. Feminists hate the term “*submission*,” but it is a Biblical word and godly women will pursue its requirements.

***2:12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.***

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shirts and tank-tops may be acceptable in some situations, but are certainly not appropriate in church or the business world. In the business community, professionals realize that dress is a statement of character. Tired of people showing up at conferences in a T-shirt with a little gravy stain in the middle, specialists have introduced the term “sharp casual” to describe appropriate dress. Would to God, that fathers and mothers would teach their young men and young men posture and appropriate dress for every occasion. Godliness does not neglect outer appearance.



The verb “*I suffer not*” (evpitre,pw) should be translated, “*I do not permit.*” This verb is in the indicative, the mood of reality.<sup>60</sup> The use of “*I*” is not Paul the male-chauvinist-rabbi speaking, but Paul the apostle—*not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead (2:7)*!

What is it the ordained apostle does not permit? “I do not permit a woman to teach or to usurp authority over the man.”

The word “*teach*” is the Greek infinitive “*dida,skein.*” meaning the act of teaching.

The word “*usurp*” comes from the Greek word “*auvqentei/n.*” Originally, *auvqentei/n* meant “to kill a man.” Later, it came to mean “having absolute authority over a man.”<sup>61</sup> Two negatives are used in the verse (ouvk and ouvde.). The negative forbids the action of teaching or the exercising the authority over males in some pastoral, liturgical function.

The phrase “*over men*” should be translated “*of men*” (a genitive). That is, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have the authority of men” in the church. Women should be *in a learning role* in the assembly of God’s people, **not** *in a teaching role* where men are present. This does not mean, however, women cannot teach other women, teach the youth in a church, or hold a staff position in a church. Paul expects women to disciple other women and to teach their children (Titus 2:2-5); i.e. gifted women have a responsibility to teach two-thirds of the church—other women and the children.

But, God has **not** given our lovely sisters the responsibility to teach men. Men must be disciplined by other qualified men, **not** by women. This restriction on teaching males publically does **not** mean that a women has nothing to teach men or that in common communication a women cannot speak her mind or give her opinion on a subject. God forbid! Godly sisters have helped many a man from straying from the truth. But, it does eliminate any possibility of a women being a pastor/teacher/instructor in any church that names the Name of Christ.

***2:13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve. 2:14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.***

Paul gives the reason for this prohibition. Women are restricted from being in an authoritative teaching role belonging to men, because of **(a) the order of creation, and (b) the danger of repeating the transgression of the fall.**

**First**, it was God’s will in the material creation that Adam be the head of his wife and to lovingly lead her. Likewise, it is God’s will that men lead in the church, God’s new creation, and to lovingly lead His flock. Further, it was God’s will that Eve be a *help meet* to her husband (Genesis 2:18), and it is God’s

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<sup>60</sup> In the Korean culture, youth are taught to respect authority. They can do about anything they want unless something is impermissible. So, when a parent wants to restrain a child, the parent will say, “I forbid you to . . .” This is the strongest form of negation in that culture. Likewise, when Paul says, “I do not permit a women to teach,” such terminology is Paul’s strongest way of stating a negations—something that is just not permissible in the church. He is saying, “I forbid in the name of the Lord for a women to teach men formally from the pulpit in the church.”

<sup>61</sup> To kill a man is to exercise absolute authority over the man. Paul does not women exercising authority over men or teaching or pasturing men in the congregation.

will and that women be a helpmeet in the church; that is, in a supportive complementary role as an assistant administrator.

**Second**, God forbids a woman to lead men because it was the woman who usurped authority over Adam. Because Adam resigned positive leadership and the woman took control of the marriage, the human race fell. What happened in the original creation must **not** be repeated in the new creation!!

Interestingly, Paul does not say women should not be teachers of men because they are ignorant, ungifted, less skilled, or unspiritual. He does not say that women should not teach men because the culture did not support it. Every pastor can name at least a half-dozen sisters in the church who are more spiritual, more skilled, and more gifted than he. The teaching role is **not** determined by skill or theological training, but by sex. Better to have a weak, growing male teach the congregation than to have a more gifted woman teaching the congregation. How else will a church raise up strong, masculine, male leaders? Further, “real men” will not permit women to lead in times of war, either in the church or the military. Such condition is against the creative order, against nature, and against the laws of nature’s God.

Note that Rabbis thought it better to burn the Torah than to commit its treasures to the oversight of women.

*“500 A.D. Jerusalem Talmud (JT) notes the opinion of Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, the Tanna mentioned above: “Women’s wisdom is solely in the spindle.” He added, “The words of the Torah should be burned rather than entrusted to women” (JT Sotah 3:4 , 19a).*

***2:15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.***

Among feminists, this is one of the most hated verses in Scripture. The phrase “*she shall be saved in childbearing*” does **not** mean “*to be saved from judgment*” but *to be saved from repeating Eve’s transgression*. God has a role for men—to lead in the family and in the church, and God has a role for women—to lead their children in the things of God.

The word “*she*” is singular, and the word “*they*” is plural. Why does Paul switch from the singular to the plural? And, who does the word “*they*” refer to? “*They*” could refer to women, or “*they*” could refer to children, or “*they*” could refer to men and women. In the context, Paul moves from the individual *woman* to the corporate subjects, *women*. ***If women continue in faith, and charity, and holiness and sobriety, they will be saved from repeating Eve’s transgression.***

**In summary**, to dismiss this passage by claiming that it is culturally irrelevant<sup>62</sup> or that Paul is a male chauvinist does injury to the integrity Scripture. Using this argument, one could dismiss any passage of

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<sup>62</sup> Today’s “politically correct” church has dismissed this passage saying that Paul’s instruction was simply a cultural application to his time and not something applicable to the modern church. But, this is pride! If we dismiss this passage using the “cultural argument,” then we could dismiss the cross, or baptism, or the Lord’s Supper or any admonition in the Bible as something cultural. Using the cultural argument, the Episcopal Church ordained a homosexual in July, 2003. How did they do it? The liberals said that the Bible’s prohibition against homosexuality was a cultural prohibition fitting for biblical times, but in modern times, the “Spirit” (what spirit?) is leading the Episcopal Church to accept and approve of homosexual unions. Once a church abdicates the authority of Scripture and misapplies the cultural argument, then that church sets itself up to be blown and tossed by every wind of doctrine.

Scripture from application to the church. Paul does not forbid women to teach men because they are less qualified, but because of the purpose of God. It is God's will that qualified men lead the church in prayer. It is God's will that qualified men teach the entire congregation of God's people. It is not God's will that gifted, knowledgeable, qualified women Bible teachers lead in public prayer or teach God's Word where men and women are present.

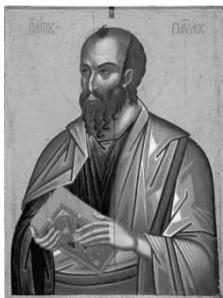
It is God's will that qualified men lead His church; that women take a supportive role in the church; that men disciple men, and women disciple women.

**Application:** How do we apply this passage to our modern structures? The context is the assembly of the whole church in a given place. Paul is not necessarily addressing some of our informal gatherings, small group prayer, or home Bible studies. He is not saying a man has nothing to learn from a godly sister. The bottom line is that when the whole church comes together in one place, that qualified males are to pray and that a qualified male is to teach the congregation. Women are to assume a supporting role. As to small groups, or a radio Bible class, or a marriage class taught by a couple, each institution is going to have to work out a policy that honors the intent of Scripture within the culture.

## **CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

### ***1 Corinthians 5***

**Q:** Is it not true a pure church free of vice has more power and influence for good than a compromised church filled with miscreant members?



This chapter authorizes the Church of Jesus Christ to excommunicate unrepentant, law-breakers from their community. But, in order to do so, church leaders must grasp the principles of proper church discipline and have the courage to execute discipline in this permissive, tolerant society.

***1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.***

Apparently, Sosthenes reported a case in Corinth to the Apostle where a young man took his father's young widow to be his bride.

***When Paul heard about the account, he was in a state of shock because such debauchery was not even rumored among the gentiles. Paul condemned this act of incest and placed this repulsive act in the category of sins known as "fornication" or porneia.***

***2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.***

Paul's shock continues. Not only was he stunned to hear of this act of incest, he was astonished at the Corinthians arrogance (puffed up) and casual leniency of this sin. Conduct opposed to fundamental morality called for grief, mourning, and discipline, and not indulgent-love and tolerance.

***3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed,***

Because Paul was mature in the things of God, he was able to see this issue clearly. Therefore, he pronounced judgment on this man's wicked behavior and denounce it as sin.

***4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,***

Paul introduces the discipline that churches can follow when they have a member that violates God's law. When a church member is living in a sin mentioned in this chapter, initiate the following steps:

**Step One:** Identify the sinful behavior and label it correctly. The church is concerned with conduct, not thoughts.

**Step Two:** Confront the man directly and call him to repentance. If he does not repent, go to step three.

**Step Three:** At a meeting of the whole church, invoke the name of the Lord, and formally and officially hand the sinner over to Satan in the name of the Lord for the destruction of the flesh.

***5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.***

The word "*deliver*" (*parodidomai*) means "to give or deliver over" a prisoner into the custody of another.

To "*deliver one . . . unto Satan*" is a formal prayer and declaration by the church that the church is removing their protective prayers and benefits of fellowships from the transgressor.

The term "*destruction*" of the flesh refers to Satan's power to punish and even kill the erring brother.

***6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?***

The "*glorying*" or *boasting* of the Corinthians about their love, tolerance of evil, and patience degenerated into a serious sin of the church.

***7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:***

The metaphor "*leaven*" is employed to communicate the infectiousness of sin. *Holiness is not contagious*, but *sin contaminates everyone who tolerates it*. Discipline is necessary so the whole church can be healthy and unleavened.

***8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.***

Paul presents this young church with "a very deep and penetrating view of what the Christian life is, how it is sustained, and what it demands" (MacLaren).

"*the feast*" refers to the Lord's Supper (a.k.a. communion, Eucharist, breaking of bread) which the Lord instituted the night before He was betrayed to replace the Passover Meal. The Passover was merely a shadow of the cross where His body was broken and His blood was shed for our sins.

It is a feast because the symbols of the bread and the wine invoke reflection of God's breathtaking banquet at the table of salvation provided by the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (Exodus 12: Luke 22:7-38).

*"let us keep the feast"* (a present, active, volitive subjunctive): The Apostle exhorts the Corinthians to join the whole Christian community world-wide to remember Christ and His accomplishments at Calvary, but to do so without leaven – a metaphor for sin.

Most likely Paul was thinking of the Hebrew tradition of women performing spring house cleaning while carefully going through the cupboards removing every fragment of leaven before the Passover Meal - a marvelous shadow-picture of sanctification in the Christian life -- a walk which requires all believers to be holy and to eliminate traces of leaven in their own heart and mind.

The *"old leaven"* is a symbol of the sinner's old life and habits of sin. Believers, in their walk with God, are required to forsake all vestiges of the Adamic life in order to please Him.

*"neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness."* The term *"malice"* refers to *mens rea* or evil intentions -- the secret motivations of the mind and heart. Wickedness refers to the conduct of habitual practicing sin during this pilgrimage on earth.

Positively, believers are ordered to keep the feast with *"the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth;"* that is, to replace the leaven of malice and wickedness with sincerity and truth.

Because the shadows of the Passover were fulfilled in the Christ-event, God has granted to Christians the authority to make all of life a festival - a gala whereby believers put off the old man and put on the new man; to remove the grave clothes of selfishness and to wear the regalia of righteousness that feature the beauty of holiness -- the golden attributes of love. Believers don't have to be dirty. They can live clean every day.

***9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:***

Apparently, Paul wrote a previous letter to the Corinthians which has not been preserved. One of the major purposes of that letter was to communicate to the church to separate themselves from sin and to avoid companions with defiling habits.

The word *"company"* (*sunanamignusthai*) has to do with close friendship and association. Obviously, Paul is NOT ordering the Christians to withdraw from all sinners or they *"must needs go out of the world."* Rather, he orders the saints to remain an "arm's length" from sinners practicing the sins in verse 10; and, to disassociate from so-called *"brethren"* trapped in one of these behaviors.

**Step Five:** Some holy man / pastor / elder in the church needs to admonish the flock to disassociate and separate themselves (in a social sense) from unrepentant people engaged in any of the sinful behaviors described in this chapter.

**Step Six:** Excommunicate the erring member from the church and the privileges of church membership.

This is done in love for the good of the "black sheep" in order to bring him to repentance; and, for the good of the church that other members might not be infected by the same sins. This final step is a public step that must be executed in a way that honors Christ and protects the privacy rights of the transgressor; that is, make your words brief, accurate, and honorable.

Consider developing church discipline policies before they have to be executed, and then consign the duties of church discipline to a mature, ruling elder who knows how to discipline members for the glory of God with a view of protecting privacy rights of the transgressor.

***10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.***

The apostle limits his order in his previous statement (letter). Disassociation from transgressors in the world is not totally possible, but it is possible to disconnect socially from transgressing Christian brothers.

Paul is NOT calling the Christians at Corinth to separate from weak brethren, struggling brethren, imperfect brethren, erring brethren, or people with peccadillos, but from unrepentant brethren engaged in any of the following mortal-sins:

*Fornication* ( pornos ) includes any forbidden sexual act: casual sex with the opposite sex, prostitution, rape, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, transvestitism, crossdressing, lewdness, and possibly porn addiction. (Note: pornography is an in-your-face public nuisance, but a self-confessed porn enthusiast may need prayer and accountability more than he / she needs church discipline).

*Covetousness* ( pleonektais = over reachers ) is not referring to "desires" or "thoughts" but to specific conduct: stealing, extortion, burglary, larceny, robbery, vandalism, fraud, pickpocketing, filching, pilfering, and any act that deprives another of his property or the value of his property.

*Extortion* ( harpax ) is the practice of obtaining something, especially money, through force or threats: blackmail, intimidation, coercion, duress, bullying, and generally menacing a victim.

(Warning: extortioners and the covetous people dress nicely and often engage in the practice of slander to deflect people's attention away from themselves to another.)

*Idolatry* ( idololatrais ) includes taking pay for obscene acts, engaging in commercial schemes, fraud, practicing rites associated with the cults, practicing pop psychology, worshipping the Zodiac or fake science, addiction to pornography, hoarding as a pack rat, obtaining tattoos, addiction to drugs or alcohol, obsession with vanity, politics, health, or other cultural fads.

Again, Paul's concern is not with peccadillos, bad manners, or foibles but with transgressions of God's law by adult members of the church. Disobedience by children are in the jurisdiction of the family and should be handled by the family where reason and righteousness prevails.

***11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.***

Paul repeats himself. He is **not** ordering people to disassociate from all transgressors, but **ONLY** from professing believers who habitually violate God's law.

*Railing* ( loidoros ) includes gossip, blasphemy, slander, defamation, libel, smears, aspersions, calumny, muckraking and any other malicious conduct that murders the reputation of a man.

Note: Telling the truth about another when the truth needs to be told, howbeit unflattering is not railing. There is an appropriate place and time to tell the ugly truth about a transgressor. But, reckless, casual, informal muckraking is not acceptable.

*Drunkard* (methusos) includes any addiction to alcohol, food, drugs, soft drinks, food, or other substances that control the man causing him to be a danger to himself and others.

***12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?***

The "I" is Paul and those who are likewise committed to Christ. Since the church ONLY has in personam jurisdiction over church members and subject-matter jurisdiction over the conduct-actions of its members, Paul limits the discipline of excommunication and disassociation to those "members" of a church fellowship. This social-judicial authority does not extend past the church doors into the community.

***13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.***

Paul adopts the formalities of a judge and pronounces the sentence to have these habitual sinners expelled from the church.

The adverb "*without*" (*exo*) refers to members of society that are outside the jurisdiction of the ecclesia.

As to the sins of those without, it is God's job to deal with them as He's sees fit; that is, it is none of the church's business what they do or don't do. But sinning members within the fellowship of the local body are within the jurisdiction of church law, and those "wicked persons" must be "put away" (*exairo*) and driven out of the assembly.

***Therefore, let us keep the feast with unleaven bread***

Church discipline is part of church law and its judicial court system (1 Corinthians 6). Churches have a duty to set up an equitable judicial system and to judge disputes among believers, as well as to discipline fallen members—not to injure and embarrass them, but to rebuke them and to call them to repentance.

Paul calls the church to develop lawyer like competence in church matters.

The purpose of church discipline is to awaken the erring believer and to motivate them to forsake their sin in order to be restored to the company of God's saints.

Generally speaking, the process of discipline involves **the steps found in Matthew 18:**

**Step One** (Matthew 18:15). Approach your brother individually, gather facts, discern, and if there is active sin, then reprove him.

**Step Two** (Matthew 18:16). If the sinning brother refuses to listen to the one who has rebuked him privately, the next step in the discipline process is to take one or two more believers along to confront him again. This process may take several visits so that all may discern the facts, allegations, and evidence is considered. Real violations of law must be ascertained. We are not concerned here about hurt feelings and social faux pas, but actions that violate the Ten Commandments. A list of unacceptable behaviors are found at 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 6:9-10. Witnesses are present to confirm facts and to refute assertions lacking proof of claim; to protect both parties; and to assure equitable due process. It is possible at this

stage to have the matter settled and dropped either because the charges are frivolous or because the charges are true and the sinning brother repents and agrees to forsake his sins.

At this stage all must know God's law; discern the facts; gather evidence; and, make a spiritual judgment about the behavior. The concern is as follows: what law has been broken? What is the evidence? Are the charges accurately described? Are they true or false? Is there enough evidence there to merit rebuke?

Note: church membership is important here. We don't discipline visitors or guests, only communicant members. All others we challenge.

**Step Three** (Matthew 18:17a). If the brother has not sinned, the matter needs to be dropped. If the brother has sinned and refuses to listen and respond to the tribunal of witnesses, those witnesses are then are obligated to inform the church leaders (v. 17a). Furthermore, the church leadership has not duty to entertain a charge by its members who have not followed step one and two. This is most appropriately done by bringing the matter to the attention of the elders, who in turn review the charges, confirm the facts, and oversee its communication to the assembly as a whole.

**Step Four** (Matthew 18:17b). The fourth and final step in the process of church discipline is excommunication (disfellowship). If a sinning believer refuses to listen even to the church, he is to be banned from the fellowship. Jesus said, "let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer" (v. 17b). Most likely, the believer will no longer be attending the church. A letter from the elders is appropriate . . . and after the specified time, if the brother does not respond, the elders should announce to the church that brother or sister \_\_\_\_\_ has been removed from the church rolls.

Some sins are so egregious and some sinners so rebellious that they do not need prolonged due process.

**Warning One: The church's authority is one of limited jurisdiction.** The church does not have jurisdiction over the way a man runs his family unless there is a clear violation of the Ten Commandments and relevant case law.

Furthermore, the church does **not** have jurisdiction over civil rulers and the institutions of government except those persons who seek church counsel and fellowship. Party affiliation, tax matters, voting preferences, traffic offenses are matters between the Citizen and the state. The church has no duty to adjudicate such matters; and, in fact, commits ultra vires acts against the Word of God for poking its nose where it does not belong, and into matters it does not understand. The church has **no** jurisdiction in matters pertaining to federal or State Statutes, rules, codes, and regulations.

Some American Protestants are so opinionated and squeaky clean, they want to become the accuser, judge, and jury on how a man manages his relationship to government. In some circles, Peter, Paul, and Barnabas would be booted out of the fellowship because they had a conflict with the town' pagan magistrates. Some modern elder boards would discipline the disciples for being accessories to a fugitive; that is, when they helped Paul escape over the walls of Damascus (Acts 9:25).

**Warning Two: Beware of labeling disputes a disciplinary matter.** In my opinion, the most abused text on discipline is Titus 3:9-10. Often times brothers disagree on doctrine and matters of church polity.

Disagreement with church leadership is not a sin, and church leadership needs to tread carefully when managing a competent brother who challenges church policy. Likewise, the one conducting a disagreement needs to take the high road; *to guard the means as well as the ends*.



The division mentioned in Titus has to do with a man, an apostate, who has departed from the fundamentals of the Christian faith, and who is seeking to cut sheep out of the herd to develop his own church franchise. However, an irascible, hostile, punitive disagreement can't be tolerated by any church board.

**Warning Three:** Beware of bringing thoughts and emotions up for church discipline. The mind is the property of God, and the church has **no** business playing psychologist. Moreover, emotions are funny things. Just because someone gets their feelings hurt by a second party does not mean the second party did something wrong. Emotional hurts may be due to weaknesses within offended Christian. Our whole culture is a “touchy-feely,” “feel-goodie” matrix. **Church discipline is concerned with real, viable violations of God's law** and **not** the day-to-day emotional reactions of sheep interactions. For this reason, Matthew 18 is concerned about “*offenses*.” We get the word “*scandal*” from this word. It refers to “bait and hook” in the original Greek – a serious injury to another or betrayal of trust.

## CHURCH MEETINGS

*The church is God's gathered people as well as His scattered people.* Few things are more important than a meeting of the church. Churches are built and destroyed based on the success of their meetings. Four activities are specifically described in Acts 2:42.

Practically: Each church must decide what kind of church it is going to be and to what purpose its meeting are ordered. In an effort to win the lost, some leaders organize the whole church around the goal of winning the unsaved to Christ; others, concerned about purity, use their church meetings as a means to edify the saints and do their evangelizing outside the church.

Should the church use its meeting as the primary method of winning the lost: hence, a “seeker-friendly” church? There is evidence that NT writers intended the church meeting to appeal to the lost (1 Corinthians 14; James 2). If the church uses its services to win the lost or at least give amiable messages to unbelievers, then when do believers get fed or built up in the faith?

Shouldn't the church use its meetings to edify the saints? There is ample evidence that this is the main purpose of gathering together (Ephesians 4:8-13). The goal of church is to learn about Christ and to mature in the faith; that is, to learn about what the Bible has to say on the issues of our time. If Christians gather for edification, how does the church do evangelism? It appears from the life of Jesus, that he was more interested in a committed few than a large, capricious crowd. A devoted minority can accomplish ten times more than the uncommitted majority. Edification is more important than evangelism, but barely. And, whatever is done should be done for the glory of God.

## CHURCH FINANCES

*1 Corinthians 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?*

Our text is case law in alignment with the Eight Commandment, "Thou shall not steal." God loves his animals, and those they labor in the field must be fed and cared for. The Commandment is negative because it prohibits stingy farmers from impoverishing beast of burden.

But, the commandment, says Paul, was meant to be applied to churchmen; that is, to prevent congregations from abusing pastors. Churches will neglect the needs of a pastor unless trained to give Biblically -- a subject even the best pastors seem incapable of doing. What pastor wants to appear like he is preaching to increase his salary? Yet, this is what the apostle had to do. The Corinthians robbed Paul. Abused Paul! Used Paul! This church needed to learn how to love their pastor not keep him humble and poor. So, Paul, the pastor, had to teach his carnal church on how they should care for him—the selfless, sacrificial minister to the Corinthians. Giving to the church where you are fed is so basic. It is really part of Giving 101.

**Q:** The Old Testament commanded tithing. Should the church teach tithing as the means of supporting God's work?

The Bible indicates that God's people are the ones who should support His work, not the heathen (2 John 7). They should do this by sacrificial giving as an act of worship in the Name of Jesus (Mark 14:3-6; Philippians 4:17-18).

Jesus observed how the multitude was putting money into the treasury. He commented that a poor widow, who gave two small copper coins, had out given all the rest combined (Mark 12:41-44). God watches what we give and evaluates us accordingly. Jesus spoke of "laying up treasures in heaven" rather than treasures on earth (Matthew 6:20). He said that if we have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon (money, riches), how could God entrust us with true riches? He was emphatic. "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:9-14). He said, "Give and it shall be given unto you" (Luke 6:38). Jesus believed in teaching about giving.

Paul laid down a principle of giving through the local church (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). It was to be on the first day of every week (regularly), with money put aside for God (systematically), as God has prospered them (proportionately). None were exempt. Even the poor received money through the church (Romans 16:26; Acts 6:1). The saints acted collectively, not as individuals. This does not mean that we should never give to people in need, or workers, except through the local church. It does mean that the local church should have a clear priority in our giving, especially in fundamental, regular, sacrificial support.

Tithing was an OT order. Tithing supported Israel's temple program. But, nowhere in the New Testament does the concept of tithing appear as a dogmatic precedent for the church. While tithing is not commanded in the New Testament, the principle of sacrificial giving extends to every age. While tithing was a legal requirement under the law, it seems like it should have a proper application in modernity. Giving is a by-product of grasping God's grace (Genesis 14, 28; 2 Corinthians 8-9). It seems reasonable that what was so emphatically demanded in the OT would have some gracious application to the NT church.

Jesus said, "Give unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and unto God what belongs to God." Let us not forget the last part, "Give unto God what belongs to God." Even Caesar is required to give unto God what belongs to God.

What belongs to Caesar? The answer is closer to nothing than something. What belongs to God? The answer is closer to everything than something (Psalm 24:1). Christians have *giving to Caesar* down pat! Regrettably, Christians give to Caesar before they give to God. In fact, they give more to Caesar than they give to God. When finances are short, Caesar gets paid first, and then, if anything is left over, the average Christian will throw a few coins into the collection plate.

The American tax system and the oppressive IRS collection system challenges even the most prudent among us. Christians are more familiar with the U.S. Tax Code than they are about the Bible's instruction about money. And, since employees are paid in FRNs which are worthless, giving and tithing must be scrutinized more seriously through the lens of Scripture. Shame on pastors for not understanding the Word of God. Pity the pastor that does not understand the U.S. tax system and the greatest heist in history. The government cannot tax a church, nor can it lawfully tax the gifts the church gives to the pastor. Every gift is non-taxable. But, if the church acts like a 501 c (3) organization and treats the pastor like a CEO of its corporation—an executive officer of the United States, Inc., then his “salary” is taxable income. Selah. (Moran, August 14, 2007).

*DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO – The tax evasion indictment against San Diego-based evangelist Morris Cerullo has been dismissed by a judge who ruled federal prosecutors and IRS agents misled the grand jury on the key legal issue in the case. {Naw, the Internal Rascals Service wouldn't do that, would they?}*

*Benitez ruled the case had to be dismissed because grand jury members were not told that the distinction between whether money given to religious ministers is earned income subject to tax or a gift depends on the intent of the person handing over the money.*

**Q:** And, if people follow the Scripture, shouldn't all offerings be gifts?

Unfortunately, giving is not only a Biblical concern, it is an internal revenue issue. The pastor would do well to study the fraud in the American tax system and to develop a Biblical strategy to help the church to escape the clutches of the corporate veil that hangs over it like a black cloud. Keep in mind, the First Amendment protects free churches . . . but it does not protect a 501 c (3) organization from being controlled by Satan's agency, the IRS. A “church” in contract with the government creates liabilities and ceases to be the *corpus* of Christ because it has become a dead, fictional governmentally created corporation – an artificial entity!

### **VOODOO IN THE CHURCH**

We must discuss an unpopular macabre issue among God's people — voodoo in the church. Gifts and salaries are as different as night and day. “Gift” is an alive, Biblical term associated with the living corpus of Christ. “Income” is a gravestone that belongs to cemetery corporations. Because today's church / organization as a whole is “double minded,” it sees itself as a creature of Christ **and** an IRS corporation. Deacons practice voodoo in the backroom of the church by casting spells on God's gifts morphing them into occult “incomes.” Throw in some tithes, W-2 frog tails, 1099 finger nails, and W-4 fangs into the corporate witch's caldron, and “Walla!” Offerings to God becomes buckets of blood that feed the Dracula of government. Why are God's people dancing with the dead and sniffing bone dust from the coffins of the IRS? Why are “churches” so obedient to the IRS and so disobedient to Scripture? While government has a duty to obey God, any cooperation with the State needs to be cautious and limited.

A double minded church is unstable in all her ways (James 1:8). Preachers lecture churches on giving, but once the church treasurer does his hocus pocus over the offering plate, the holy offering is suddenly converted into filthy lucre. Instead of supporting the pastor and the staff with gifts of love in appreciation for their service (“double honor”; 1 Timothy 5:17), corporate officers with a little black magic transform gifts into salaries and incomes. The treasurer acts as **double agent** and government informant notifying the IRS, a foreign for-profit corporation, of the pastor’s most intimate financial secrets. Can anyone say, “Judas?” The treasurer becomes the uncompensated tax collector for Caesar and a Benedict Arnold to the people of God. Does not the Bible teach that the pastor is the servant of Christ? That he serves God’s people out of love for Him (John 21:15; 1 Peter 5:1-10)? That God loves cheerful “**givers**”? It does not say God loves cheerful church employers! But, church givers! Why then do church leaders in charge of the “offering” (or is that “income?”<sup>63</sup>) insist the Pastor fill out Form W-4s as if he was an employee<sup>64</sup> of the United States Government? Why does the alter ego of the church called a corporation shackle the pastor with duties and obligations as the CEO of its corporation and force him to involuntarily serve for filthy lucre, report his “gifts” or is that “wages”<sup>65</sup> to the IRS (1 Timothy 3:3, 8)? Has not Christian love degenerated into liabilities; gifts into income; free grace into tax obligations? There is a biblical word for this and it is called **hypocrisy** or is that **treason** to Christ (Matthew 23:28)?

Not only is the modern, American church “*bewitched*” by BAR attorneys, they have exchanged their birthright under Christ for a “*pot of porridge*” (Genesis 24:30). Modern deacon boards are nothing more than Esaus looking for “tax deductions” in their giving program. Fornicating with the government to obtain “*bean soup*,” they have exchanged the “*Headship of Christ*” for the “Headship of the IRS.” That is correct, the legal head of every 501 c (3) organization is the IRS — a brotherhood consisting of Mormons, the church of Satan, and other nefarious creatures in the dungeon of our Godzilla government.

There is a solution for the bewitching of the church and it is this: It must return to its first love (Revelation 2:1-3). The church must come to its senses and decide if it is going to serve Christ and obey His Word, or serve the government and obey the four million words of the Internal Revenue Code. No *church* can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). “How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD *be* God, follow him: but if Baal (the United States Government) *be* God, then follow the IRS. And the people answered him not a word” (1 Kings 18:21. Insertions mine). I wonder why? Remember, Baal worship was the belief that the king was a god; that the king was the source of law; that a citizen’s highest duty was to the ruler of the people. No wonder God’s Word condemned Baal worship . . . and to think that it

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<sup>63</sup> It is impossible for Biblical pastors to have earned income: “...Whatever difficulty there may be about a precise scientific definition of ‘income,’ it imports, as used here, something entirely distinct from principal or capital either as a subject of taxation or as a measure of the tax; conveying rather the idea of gain or increase **arising from corporate activities**.” Doyle v. Mitchell Brothers Co., , 185, 38 S. Ct. 467 (1918)

<sup>64</sup> “. . . the term (employee) includes officers and employees, *whether elected or appointed*, of the United States, a (federal) State, Territory, Puerto Rico or any political subdivision, thereof, or the District of Columbia, or any agency or instrumentality of any one or more of the foregoing. The term ‘employee’ also includes an officer of a corporation.” The true pastor is a shepherd of God’s sheep, not a government employee, officer, or appointed official of the United States government.

<sup>65</sup> 26 USC, §3401(a) “WAGES—For the purposes of this chapter (chapter 24, Collection of Income Tax at Source on Wages), the term ‘wages’ means all remuneration (other than fees paid to a public official) for services performed by an employee (of the government).” The word “employee” is not a person working in the fifty states, but a government official.

has resurfaced in the church in modern times in and through the financial committee of the 501 c (3) corporation.

The church would do well to repent and boot their financial Benedict Arnold's out of the congregation, but that would be like handing out speeding tickets at the Indianapolis 500.

## **CHURCH INCORPORATION**

### **And the Lordship of Christ**

#### **SCRIPTURE TEXTS**

*Ephesians 1:22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,*

*Ephesians 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*

*Ephesians 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body.*

*Colossians 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

*Colossians 2:10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:*

*Colossians 2:19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.*

#### **QUESTIONS**

Who is the head of your church, the Lord Jesus Christ or the civil government?

Who controls the church in America, the Lord Jesus Christ or the civil government?

Who has ultimate authority or jurisdiction over the church, the Lord Jesus Christ or the civil government?

#### **ANSWER**

The answer depends on whether you are a free, independent church or a tax exempt 501 c 3 religious organization. The truth is that there are government, state sponsored churches, state-sanctioned politically correct churches; and, there are churches who are not government approved, state sanctioned politically correct churches.

There are preachers in this country who are government sponsored, government approved, state sanctioned politically correct preachers; and there are preachers in this country who are NOT government sponsored, government approved, state sanctioned politically correct preachers.

## **ORIGIN**

Church incorporation is not a recent issue. It was a question during the first century wherein Rome required all guilds and religious groups to register with the State.

Isaac Backus, circa 1774, a Baptist preacher, was commissioned as the agent of the Baptist churches of the Warren Association to Philadelphia to endeavor to enlist in their behalf the Continental Congress, which met there at that time. He with agents from other Associations conferred with the Massachusetts delegation and others. President Manning, of Brown University, read a memorial setting forth the grievances and oppressions under which the Baptists labored, and preyed for relief. The reason for this remonstrance was because of the pressure of churches to incorporate. Incorporated churches were able to receive the benefit of state tithes taken to support incorporated churches . . . usually Congregational Churches. Everybody paid religious taxes. Everybody! These taxes went to support incorporated preachers . . . and the Baptist did not think it was right for them to be taxed in order to support other denominational pastors. The State said they would be happy to apply their taxes to the Baptists, but they had to incorporate with the State.

**Isaac Backus** disagreed:

*The obvious reason for incorporation was to comply with the decision in the Cutter case, and thus be sure that religious taxes paid by Baptists would be returned to their ministers by parish or town treasures. For some Baptists, a more compelling reason was to enable a congregation to make binding contracts between its members and its pastor; thereby guaranteeing regular payment of a decent salary. Backus had often criticized his brethren for covetousness in failing to give adequate voluntary support to their pastors, but he could never regard the relationship between a pastor and his flock as a purely civil contract enforceable by law. He viewed the relationship at all levels as purely spiritual. To use the state to collect salaries was as wrong for the Baptists as for the Congregationalists.*

*Backus also believed that incorporation acknowledged the right of the state to decide which churches could and which could not be chartered. In addition, incorporation gave all persons in the congregation the right to vote on building or repairing a meeting house as well as paying the minister's salary. The unconverted members might then be able to outvote the converted, thereby allowing the worldlings to lord it over the saints. Baptist societies, acting like Congregational parishes, would face the same bitter conflicts between church and congregation. (Historical Magazine: Retrieved from [http://archive.org/stream/historicalmagazi04morruoft/historicalmagazi04morruoft\\_djvu.tx](http://archive.org/stream/historicalmagazi04morruoft/historicalmagazi04morruoft_djvu.tx))*

Some Baptists argue that incorporation is necessary to hold property or to receive endowment funds in the name of the church. But Backus pointed out that the law gave the deacons, or any other suitably appointed persons, power to "receive and hold estates or donations which are given for religious purposes, and to manage the same at the direction and for the good of the church or society." This device is wholly sufficient to meet the needs of the Baptists in this respect.

The annual meeting to the *Warren Association* in September 1791 took up the argument for and against church incorporation. Backus spoke vigorously for a resolution against incorporation and won the day and the association resolved,

*“That it be earnestly commended to the churches belonging to this association **by no means** to apply to civil government for incorporation . . . because **we cannot consent to blend the kingdom of Christ with the kingdom of this world nor support it by the power of the civil magistrate.**”*

Even in 1791 churchmen understood that incorporation gave the State power over the churches and compromised the headship of Jesus Christ; that is, it gave worldlings in government ultimate power over the body of Christ.

However, over the next decade, numerous other Baptist churches successfully sought the same privilege of incorporation. (Adapted from Isaac Backus and the American Pietistic Tradition, Little Brown & Co., Boston, MA, 1967, pp 220-222).

Twenty years later (1810), Barnes sought to force church incorporation on those Baptists who believed that incorporation was an unchristian surrender of a churches' power to the State. Barnes' case failed (Free Speech Center -- *Barnes v. First Parish in Falmouth* (1810)).

**First** understand, a church is not a religious organization. A church is a *fellowship of men* who share in the blessings of the kingdom of God.

**Second**, Barnes was seeking to enforce Baptist churches to incorporate who believed that incorporation was a transfer of power from the church to the State.

**Third**, Barnes lived in a jurisdiction that believed a legitimate church must be established by and approved by the State. This is in contrast to the NT churches who were created by Christ without the approval of Caesar.

**Fourth**, State control of churches are not only unbiblical, but contrary to state constitutions.

**In summary**, the topic of church incorporation is not something that has come up recently. Incorporation has been fought in America since the 1700s.

Why is incorporation such an issue? Incorporation is a denial of the authority of Jesus Christ. It all goes back to the question, who is the head of the church, the Lord Jesus or the State? Who has a right to control the church, Christ or the government?

### **CORPORATION DEFINED**

Corporation assumes "continued existence." In reality, there is only one corporation and that is the church of Christ. The church is going to live forever by virtue of the inherent life of the Savior. Man-made corporations will be destroyed by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ at His Parousia.

Incorporation means "to unite in one body" by the powers of the State. But, the church is a body -- a true body with an eternal unity, a living body established and created by Jesus Christ. And, there is a vast difference between God's heavenly corporation and State incorporation.

Al Cunningham, an attorney from California, pointed out the distinctives of incorporation.

- The corporation is created by the State.

- The corporation is sanctified by the State.
- The corporation is empowered by an energized by the State.
- The corporation is subject to the State in all things. A church named "Grace Presbyterian Church, Inc." means the church is subject to public policy of the State in all things.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF A CORPORATION**

The corporation is an artificial person, a fiction, an artificial entity that is not real. An artificial person has no God-given rights because God did not create it; it has no constitutional rights because the constitution does not protect artificial entities. An incorporated church has no rights. If the state wants to inspect the giving records, it has every right to do so. If the State wants to take the church building and sell it to pay its bills, it has every right to do so. If the State dislikes what the organization does, it can legally bulldoze the church down.

The incorporated church is a citizen of the state in relation to determining jurisdiction.

The corporation has an existence distinct from and separate from its members. The corporation can be sued without suing any member . . . and the corporation has to pay for a secular, often godless BAR attorney to defend the corporation.

Perpetual existence: A corporation has unlimited existence in the sense that it is unaffected by changes in leadership as a man-made organization.

The members are not the owners of the corporate property. If a church spent \$100,000 to improve the property, the church members do not own the property, the corporation does.

All operations of the corporation are governed by a board of directors. Individual board members have no individual power apart from the board as a whole. Not only is Christ not the head, the pastor is not the under shepherd under Christ. The board controls all of the finances and property and programs of the "church" corporation.

The members of the church have no control over the affairs of the corporation.

All the by-laws are that which control the corporation and all laws must be in compliance with public policy.

A corporation is an entity that is man-made. It is governed by man, sustained by the prowess of man, and glorifies man. When pastors talk about "church" growth, they are really discussing how to enact programs that grow the corporation. Their concern is about how to attract and please members in order to have a healthy, viable, financially strong organization. Ichabod!

### **DEFINITION OF A CORPORATION**

A corporation is an artificial person, a legal entity, an artificial person that is created by the approval and laws of the government. The corporation exists in the eyes of the law as a person, separate and distinct from the persons who own the corporation (stockholders). This means that the property of the corporation is not owned by the stockholders, but simply managed by the corporation. The government owns the property and all assets of the corporation. Debts of the corporation are debts of this artificial person, and



not of the persons running the corporation or owning shares of stock in it. The corporation can borrow “money” and seek favors from the government to sustain itself. The corporation can sue and be sued in its own name. But, the pastor or the deacons cannot defend their actions done in the name of the “church.” The must hire a government-approved attorney acquainted with fictions to defend them. The shareholders cannot normally be sued as to corporate liabilities (Legal.com).

### **KING JESUS ONLY**

According to the German historian, Ethelbert Stauffer, the religious principle of the Roman Empire, from the days of Augustus on, was **salvation by Caesar**: “Salvation is to be found in none other save Augustus, and there is no other name given to men in which they can be saved.”

This helps us to understand the boldness of St. Peter, and the total power he declared that was possessed by the Lord Jesus Christ, “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12).

When Peter preached that Jesus was Lord, he declared war on Rome and its corporations.

Modern Christians, by their devotion to the State, have fallen into the pre-Christian error that the State is god . . . and only the state can save us politically, economically, and socially.

War between Christ and Caesar, the Christians and Rome, was thus inevitable. The state and its emperors claimed to offer salvation. The church declared that salvation was only in Christ.

We are again in the age of Caesars and political saviors. All over the world, politicians proclaim their plans of salvation, and the cornerstone of their building is man. Look unto me, these false saviors declare to the peoples. Vote for me and be saved.

St. Peter faced a hostile nation whose hope of salvation was in freedom from Rome. Thus the Zealots, or revolutionists, had a large popular following. Salvation for them meant their own political order. For the Roman overlords and their followers, salvation meant Caesar’s rule and plan.

St. Peter ruled out, not only all other religions, but all the political plans of salvation with his blunt words: “Neither is there salvation in any other.” Christ is unique, and His salvation is exclusive. He is THE way, the ONLY way. Peter made emphatically clear that salvation could only be found in Christ: “for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” There are no alternate routes.

This means that false political saviors can not give salvation but only ruin. False religious saviors will only give delusions. In the world of absolute truth, we cannot say that two plus two can equal five, nor can two plus two equal three, because three and five sound close to four. We cannot play games with truth.

Thus, modern Christians are confronted by many political saviors offering a plan to save the country. But, any foundation other than Christ is bound to crumble. It is not God’s will that godless, secular states succeed. We must stand with St. Peter and declare: None other name! No other king but King Jesus!

In conclusion, a greater than Solomon is here! Jesus has been granted all authority in heaven and earth.

The church is in crisis because it is **not PRACTICING** the Lordship of Christ!!!! Yes, good churchmen will say, "Jesus is Lord;" but they deny him by their works when they incorporate with the government? How can a church say that Jesus Christ is Lord of their church and surrender it to the IRS to be governed by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms? How can Christ be our Lord when our primary objective in life is to be in total conformity to every statute, code, and bill passed by whims of CONgress? If Jesus is the Head of the church, there is no way the State can be the head of the church. If the State is the head of the church, there is no way Christ can be the head of the church. Only a freak has two heads.

Who is the head of your church? Who has jurisdiction over your assembly? Who has the final say? Is it the government or is God? Is it the Bible or 26 U.S.C.? Is it the godly pastor or a government agent such as the treasurer or accountant? On what basis do you conduct the financial affairs of your church? Is it by the authority of IRS codes and regulations or by the authority of the Word of God? If Christ is Lord, a church has no choice but to reject State control and to order their affairs by the authority of Christ's Word . . . for He said, "If you continue in my Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine" (John 8:31). The opposite is also true, if you depart from my jurisdiction and surrender to State jurisdiction, then you are NOT MY DISCIPLES. Isn't this correct?

### **THE DESTINY OF THE CHURCH**

The true church will co-exist along with the tares 501 c (3) organizations until the end of the age (Matthew 13). The church will generally be successful in preaching the gospel to the entire world until the end (Revelation 20:1-3), but it will not convert the entire world. Its mission will cease at the second coming of Christ wherein His people will serve him on a new heaven and new earth in the age to come.

## **67. THE BLESSING OF PROVIDENCE**

***Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.***

No doubt, this is one of the toughest verses in the Bible to believe, but it can bring immeasurable comfort to the struggling Christian when grasped by faith. The thundering cries of an unexpected death or financial reversal or health crisis can drown out the chorus of God's love whispered by the Spirit through His Word.

The great question before us is this: "Can good come out of tragedy?" Or, do we follow the Cynic who shouted, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die"?

Jeremiah faced this question in his prayer in Jeremiah 15.

The word *providence* is made up of two syllables, "see" and "before." Providence is the truth that God goes before His people to winnow their path and to work things for their good.

### **PROVIDENCE IS BENEFICIENT**

God's promise is that all things work together "for good." The text is **not** saying that all things that happen to us are good, but that good can come out of the bad events in our lives. One of our problems is

that we tend to interpret “good” in terms of primitive comforts: We think, “Wealth and health are good,” and “poverty and sickness are bad,” and “if it feels good, it must be good; if it feels bad, it must be bad,” and “if our bed is soft, it must be from God; if our bed is hard, it must be from the Devil.” These beliefs can be prison cells for our soul. But, truth can set us free.

The Christian faith teaches that God is good; always good; and only good; that He is good when things are going right and that He is good when things are going wrong in our lives. The Holy Scripture teaches that there is no evil in the Creator, but it also teaches that good can come out of evil because God is at work in the midst of our suffering producing good. Good does **not** come to all men. But, good can come out of every tragedy for those who love God (Psalm 34).

In the Christian system, **we must be careful to define good and what the higher good is..** Some observer said that American Christians don't mind dying for Christ, they just don't want to have to give up their stuff; that is, because we measure God's goodness in terms of how much we possess and how much pleasure we enjoy, we have difficulty understanding the true nature of God's goodness.

Consequently, Americans have little appreciation for suffering. Like Buddhists, we are more concerned about making the right choices -- choices that produce the least amount of suffering. Further, Americans tend to define goodness in terms of money and lack of pain. Wealth does not always make men wise, and health does not always make men morally strong.

To understand God's goodness, we must first learn to esteem what He values and how suffering becomes a tool in His hands to produce virtue in our lives. For example: to God patience is good. Patience is a virtue and suffering can produce goodness of patience. Humility is good and adversity can strip a man of pride. Compassion is good and affliction has a way of weaving this virtue into our spiritual fabric. If we define good only in terms of material comforts, then we are no different than the Epicureans of Paul's day. Surely, moral virtue is more esteemed in heaven than success and wealth. Virtue comes to us on the wings of suffering. In the Valley of Achor (trouble) is a door of hope (Hosea 2:15).

- It is good if affliction unites our hearts to God.
- It is good if affliction mends a divided heart.
- It is good if affliction makes us more like Christ.
- It is good if we are weaned from the world.
- It is good if we do not trust in the flesh.
- It is good if we do not put our hope in princes.
- It is good if we realize our mortality.
- It is good if we trust Christ more and self less.
- It is good if we throw off sins that enslave and bind us to vanities.
- It is good if others have an opportunity to love us.
- It is good if in affliction we can love others.

- It is good if we can give thanks in the midst of our trials.

### **PROVIDENCE IS BROAD AND INCLUSIVE**

The word “*all*” eliminates nothing. The term “*all*” includes everything.

**Affliction can work together for good.** It was after Jacob’s hip was out of joint he obtained a blessing from God. Joseph emerged from the chains of slavery to be a ruler of Egypt. Out of Ruth’s severe trial came the sweetest love story ever penned and the sublime record of God’s goodness to two women bound together in a yoke of grief. David could say, “It is good for me to be afflicted (Psalm 119:71). Judah’s captivity in Babylon purged the nation of wicked idolatry. Israel was chosen in the furnace of affliction (48:10). King Manasseh found the Lord in a prison cell. He owed more to his chains than he did his crown. In his blindness, Paul saw Christ (Acts 9:6). A sick bed can teach us more than a sermon. Poverty is a better tutor than prosperity. Satan was silenced after seeing the suffering of Job. Affliction can prepare us for glory.

**The evil of others toward us can work together for good.** “*You thought evil against me, but God meant it for good*” (Genesis 50:20). In the dark cave of wicked opportunity, David taught his men to never lift up their hand against the Lord’s anointed (1 Samuel 14). The greatest lesson on forgiveness came from Him who received the kiss of Judas. Joseph was arrested, mistreated, placed in a pit to die, and then sold into slavery to a caravan to Egypt. But, God was in it, and Joseph became the savior of the known world during the seven years of the Egyptian famine. Ruth watched her father-in-law die, her brother-in-law, and her own husband die before their time. Yet, at that moment the LORD was preparing a place for her in the heart of Boaz. Little did she know that out of her great suffering, she would wed and become the great-grandmother of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Temptation can work together for good.** The Tempter is like a ferret searching out evil. He is like a storm that tests the strength of root and limb. The strongest trees are on top of the windblown mountains. Temptations reveal our weaknesses, and cause us to send down roots into the crevasses of prayer and godliness. They cause us to turn our backs on sin. The winds of temptation keep us from lifting our heads in pride: “*Lest I should be exalted above measure, there was given me a thorn in the flesh*” (2 Corinthians 12:7). Others can be refreshed by the comfort we receive in the furnace of affliction (2 Corinthians 1:6). It is in temptation that we seek the strength of Christ and find Him to be a “*friend that sticks closer than a brother*” (Proverbs 18:24). Temptations make the man. The Civil War created giants like Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Joshua Chamberlain. Out of WWII emerged a Winston Churchill who could tell a younger generation the secret of his power, “Never, never quit!”

**Sin can work together for good.** The scalded hand of a little child is a life-long reminder of why mother said, “Do not touch.” There is no good in sin, but it can become an occasion for good. It will not work well for the impenitent, but it can work together for good to the contrite. Sin can cause us to study His word more, pray more, and seek His Spirit more. It causes us to be less judgmental of others. Sin stirs our righteousness nature and calls us to battle with all our strength, all our faith, and all our virtues. The bitterness of sin can cause us to spit it out and cry in godly sorrow. Blushing over sin is better than boasting in our pride. The shame can drive us to claim the benefits of justification and regeneration. We love Him more deeply and exercise our faith more strongly after sin defiles us. We have a deeper appreciation of the cross, and a greater wonder in the love of God. If we love grace more and legalism less, even sin works together for good.

**Abandonment:** How frightening are the words, “My beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone” (Song of Solomon 5:6). How unsettling to be alone, abandoned by a lover, or forsaken by a friend. And, nothing is more terrifying than when it appears God suspends His grace in our lives. Let us remember: God never withdraws His love from the ungodly, because they have never known His love. The sense of abandonment can only happen to the devout Christian. Isaiah spoke for God and said, “In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a **moment**; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer” (Isaiah 54:8).

Though He may chasten us and we lose that temporary feeling of security (Hebrews 12:4-13), His promise remains firm, “I will never, never, no never, never, never forsake you,” (Hebrews 13:5).

Five negatives are found in this verse. It is the strongest way to negate a fiction. When we feel the cold winds of being forsaken, the warmth of the sunshine of His presence feels more precious to our souls: “Light is sown for the righteous” (Psalm 97:11). Abandonment makes us appreciate Christ on the cross: “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” What manner of love is this that He was forsaken in time that we might never be forsaken in eternity?

### **PROVIDENCE IS ACTIVE**

The verb “*is working*” is a present active indicative; i.e. durative in present time. In the most heart breaking of news, God is constantly, perpetually working things together for good. Our difficulty is the silence of God. Nothing terrifies us more than silence. “Be not silent to me,” cried the psalmist (28:1). This text declares that when the heavens are silent and the sea is still and God is unseen, He is at work. God is too knowing to be negligent; too loving not to care; too wise not to know what to do. Out of the broken timbers of our lives, God is busy at work constructing a godly house.

### **PROVIDENCE COMFORTS**

The verb, “*We know*” is a perfect, active indicative. The emphasis is upon the result. The knowledge of God’s providence comforts are raging emotions and fearful hearts.

As our God, He works for our good: “*They shall be my people, and I will be their God*” (Jeremiah 32:38). What precious words, “*My people*” and “*Their God!*” The one, infinite, personal, virtuous, triune Spirit knows our troubles and sets to work in the most terrifying circumstances to bring order out of the chaos and good out of tragedy. All His attributes are available to work good in our lives.

His power that delivered David from Goliath; that raised the Shunammite’s son from the sick bed; that delivered three Hebrews in the furnace; and, that delivered Daniel in the lion’s den is available to those who love God.

His wisdom that created the world, that worked salvation at the cross, and that united Jew and Gentile into one family is available to those who love Him: “*How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!*” (Romans 11:33).

His faithfulness is new every morning. His virtues of love and hate, grace and holiness can be released to strengthen the weak heart and defeat the most powerful of enemies. He crowns us with mercies (Psalm 103:4). His mercy is higher than our mountains of sin (Psalm 103:11). His truth can comfort and cleanse and sever and heal.

As our Father, He loves us and plans only the best for our lives. “*As a man chastens His son, the Lord God chastens them that fear Him*” (Deuteronomy 8:5). He chose us to be “holy and blameless before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:4).

As a faithful Friend in the time of trouble, God comes to His struggling people. He is a Friend that sticks closer than a brother who will never leave or forsake us; a Friend that cares; a Friend that comforts in a time of need: “*I have called you friends*” (John 15:15).

As our Physician, he knows what is best. He knows what we need. He knows what will work, and what will fail. His medicine can be strong or gentle. Some medicine is easily to swallow; others are unpleasant. With some he adds a teaspoon of sugar, and other kinds are bitter and sour. He does not study to please, but to cure.

As our Savior, He delivers our souls from the power of sin. Is our sin strong? He can subdue our iniquities under His power (Micah 7:19). The zeal of the Lord will accomplish this!

### **THE BLESSING FOR THOSE WHO LOVE GOD**

Men are exhorted to love God: “O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer” (Psalm 31:9).

All things do **not** work together for good for atheists, antichrists, and Christ neglectors. Those who are not living for Christ cannot claim the blessings of providence. This promise only applies to those who have a burning flame in their hearts for the Savior. Since those who love God can only claim this promise, it is important to understand a little about the nature of love. While no man's love for God is perfect, a man's love for God should be characterized by a healthy portion of the following if he wants to claim the blessings of providence found in Romans 8:18:

- Love is the exercise of soul that responds to the revelation of Christ. It is the burning desire to know Him, to walk with Him, and to commune with Him: “*My heart and flesh crieth out for the living God*” (Psalm 84:2).
- Love is free and without compulsion. The loving heart finds itself drawn to Scripture, impulsive in prayer, and warm towards the fellowship of the saints.
- Love is genuine: “*Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*” (Ephesians 6:24).
- Love is undivided in its affections (Hosea 10:2; James 1:8).
- Love is liberal; that is, it is good, beneficent, full and often foolish in its expenditures upon the object of its affections. It is bold and courageous in its expression of love toward its Lover.
- Love is focused. Love's thoughts and goodness is like the heat produced by a magnifying glass exposed to the radiant Sun. It gathers the energy and directs it toward an object. Love for God is not love for life, things, or even religion. Love is focused on the one true God of Scripture.
- Love thinks about its Lover. The lover of God will find his thoughts drifting above to be refreshed by the virtues of his Beloved.

- Love seeks to please. All lovers want to do that which will make their lover happy. In the Christian sense, love obeys the Master (John 14:21; 15:10).
- Love is easily grieved. The one who loves God cannot help but weep when he offends God through sin. The heart that springs upward when it hears the Scripture falls down after having sinned against the One it loves. In fact, mature love is grieved at the thought of sin: "*How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*" queried Joseph (Genesis 29:9).
- Love is sacrificial. It sacrifices self for the joy of Another. It endures suffering and says no to self-gratification. "*I am crucified to the world*" said Paul (Galatians 6:14).
- Love talks about the object of his love. Those who love God cannot help but talk about Him and desire to magnify Him to the world.
- Love for God longs for the second coming of Christ (2 Timothy 4:8). The Spirit within the heart cries, "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

If one's love for God is marked by these characteristics, he can have the assurance that all things work together for good. If one does not love God, he can begin to love Him by picking up the Bible and by reading the life of Christ. There is so much in Christ worthy of love if one will only take the time to commune with Him. Love is the most noble of graces and when activated, can inflame the heart.

More importantly is to realize that God's love for us is unconditional. He does not demand love from us for Him to be loving to us. God is love because of Who He is; and, not what we are. Our love for Him separates us from the common man with no love for God.

### **THE BLESSING FOR THOSE WHO ARE CALLED**

The second qualification to whom the blessings of providence belong are to "*them that are called*." This can only refer to Christians. Only a Christian can claim this promise. Atheists, religionists, cults, and secularists have no part in this promise. Consider the following facts about the God's calling:

Many are called, but few are chosen (Matthew 20:16): We must distinguish between the general proclamation of the gospel and invitations to come to Christ, and the effectual call. The call in Romans 8:28 is the call of grace that has been effectively activated upon an individual by the power of God (Psalm 110:3). Calvinists call it "irresistible grace."

- The call is to the obedience of faith (Romans 1:5-6); i.e. it is a call to believe in the gospel of Christ and to follow Him.
- The call is to come out of darkness and to walk in the light (1 Peter 2:9).
- The call is to communion, the fellowship of the Son (1 Corinthians 1:9). The call is not to be religious, but to be involved in a living relationship with Jesus Christ.
- The call is a heavenly call (Hebrews 2:1); i.e. it is from heaven and for heaven.
- The call is high calling (Philippians 3:14). It is called high because the believer is called to the lofty vocation of worship, cross carrying, and self-sacrificial love.

- The call is unto holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:7); i.e. the Christian is called to forsake sin and to pursue righteousness.
- The call is glorious (2 Peter 1:3); i.e. it is lofty, radiant, privileged, and wonderful.
- The call is to virtue (2 Peter 1:3); i.e. the call expects the privileged to put on the virtues of Christ and to express goodness in all his dealings with men.
- The call of God is irresistible because “*who can resist His will*” (Romans 9:19).

In conclusion, one of the benefits of the gospel is the blessing of providence. God's purpose for our lives includes nothing but good. Everything that happens to us is not good, but good can come out of bad events. Like Joseph who experienced rejection, banishment, enslavement, treachery, and his feet hurt with iron fetters, we too may experience a diversity of evils in our lives. But, just as God worked good for Joseph, He can make good come out of evil for you and me.

*Genesis 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

## 68. THE BLESSING OF ETERNAL SECURITY

***Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.***

Can a person lose his salvation, and if not, won't eternal security destroy a person's motivation to live a holy life?

The phrase “*eternal security*” is **not** a biblical word, nor is it, in my opinion a formal doctrine of Scripture. It is implicit in Scripture, but not explicitly expounded. It is a conclusion drawn from a study of the character of God, the work of Christ, and the interpretation of selected verses. Nowhere does the Bible say, “Once saved always saved,” nor does it say, “If you willfully sin, you will be lost.”

Calvinist advance the view (TULIP) that God's true children will persevere in faith and faithfulness to the Lord till the end of their lives. Paul said, “He who has begun a good work in you will perfect it to the end” (Philippians 1:6).

### IMPORTANCE OF ETERNAL SECURITY

- **Peace and joy:** Without security can there be any peace, joy, or appreciation of God's love (Romans 5:1; 1 John 4:16ff)?
- **The integrity of Christ's atonement:** What did He die for and how effective is the blood of Christ? To be forgiven and unforgiven at the same time is a contradiction in terms.
- **Salvation by faith is at stake.** Does faith, or faith plus works save a man? If salvation is by works, how much works does one have to produce and how “*good*” does one have to be to obtain salvation?



- **Unconditional love**<sup>66</sup>: If the Father's relationship with His children is dependent on their behavior, then His love is limited and conditional. Remember the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 15). The covenant was based on God's character, not Abraham's integrity.
- **Evangelism**: If one is not sure if he is saved or secure in God's salvation, how can he preach the "good news" to others? What would motivate him?
- **Focus**: A person who is worried and concerned about whether his behavior matches the standard God has set for salvation will be centered on self and on his own behavior rather than on the accomplishments of Christ or the needs of others (Stanley, 2002, p. 11).
- **Glory**: Who gets the glory for salvation, God and His saving grace or the rugged, self-made man who by sheer grit makes all the right choices?

## **TWO MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ETERNAL SECURITY**

**Misconception One:** *Once you are saved it does not matter how you live, you can never lose your salvation.* If this premise is correct, no wonder many people reject the doctrine of eternal security. While some may abuse grace, those who are motivated by grace lead a holy life! People who advance the concept that one can lose his salvation do so based on hypothetical cases. For example, consider this account: "I know a man who received Christ and came to church for two years. Then he committed fornication. Now his life is a mess. He's an alcoholic, on drugs, and won't even talk about the things of God. Hasn't he lost his salvation?" No doubt there are people like this! But, one has to ask, "Was he really saved in the first place?" It is one thing to sin, get cleaned up, and continue walking after God. It is quite another to fall into the pigsty and stay there the rest of one's life.

**Misconception Two:** *If you willfully sin after you come to know Christ, you can lose your salvation.* Those who teach this doctrine usually believe they have arrived at some kind of perfectionism. They are just not honest about themselves or others. How are proponents of this statement defining sin? Is fear a sin? Is anger a sin? Is worry a sin? Who has not sinned willfully after coming to Christ? Christians should sin less, but they are not sinless. Continuing in sin is impossible for true men. One has to redefine sin or deny sin's work in one's life in order to maintain the idea that he has been totally delivered from the presence and work of sin to be secure.

**Q:** What is the greater heresy: (a) to be content with sinful imperfection, or (b) to believe in sinless perfection? To me, the former is the greater heresy.

## **A POSITION ON ETERNAL SECURITY**

- This position of eternal security does **not** believe that a *profession of faith* is the same as *saving faith* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

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<sup>66</sup> The term "unconditional love" is not a biblical word. I am not convinced that God's love is unconditional—for one because a person has to believe to enjoy it. In trying to describe the wonder of God's enormous love for sinners, Christians have coined the term "unconditional love" in an attempt to describe it. It is a term used to describe the character of God's love, but in reality, love must be received. However, it need not be earned as Armenians teach.

## PILLAR FOUR: THE EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S HISTORY ON THE BELIEVER

- This position does **not** perpetuate “*easy believism*”; that is, that merely raising hands or saying a prayer or walking down an aisle is synonymous with true faith. *Faith for a moment does not save a person for eternity!*
- This position does **not** believe in “*faith without works*,” that is, true faith eventually bears fruit in good works (Ephesians 2:10; 1 John 3:14). Even the thief on the cross, with only a short time to live, had a change in attitude. Good works, however, are the fruit of salvation, not the root of salvation.
- This position does **not** believe in faith without perseverance. A lack of perseverance may indicate pseudo faith. Jesus spoke of the seed that fell on shallow soil, “*they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.*” A person who lacks roots and likes thorns is not saved (Matthew 13:6).
- This position does **not** believe that faith is easy or comes without personal struggle. In fact, a commitment of faith to Christ may be very costly. It was costly to the disciples. Paul announced, “*I have suffered the loss of all things*” (Philippians 3:8).
- This position does **not** believe that sinful, rebellious “*professing believers*” should feel secure. In fact, rebellion is usually a sign that the individual has not yet subjected himself to the rule of Christ. It is good for rebels to feel insecure because they are on the Devil’s ground (1 Samuel 15:23). Rebels need to be warned and they need to seriously examine themselves to see if they are truly in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5). Having said this, things in life happen to good people and they may not respond correctly to a tragic event. A true Christian may flounder with God and His people for a time. He may disappoint many, but if he is a true believer, heaven is still his home.

### **CRITICAL BELIEFS**

What do those who hold to the doctrine of eternal security really believe?

- They believe that those who are truly saved, though they may struggle, even stumble, can never lose their salvation. They hold this view **not** because of the quality of life they live, but because of the accomplishments of Christ on Calvary on their behalf: “*Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died . . .*” (Romans 3:22-27; 8:34). The use of the pronoun “*Who*” personifies persecutions and distress.
- They believe that salvation is of God and not of man; that it is God’s work at Calvary through Christ that saves us, not His work within us by the Holy Spirit that saves us; that salvation is a gift of grace, not a reward for service; that salvation is always undeserved, and that salvation is never earned by good behavior or human choices.
- They believe that they can give themselves to a ministry of love because they are personally “*accepted in the beloved*” (Ephesians 1:3). Service flows out of thankfulness and security, not out of necessity and fear. Love is the reason for service, not the means of obtaining God’s love (1 John 4:18).

### **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

**Jacobus Arminius** was a Dutch theologian who lived during the last part of the 16th century. He disagreed with the Calvinists over the doctrines of predestination, election, and eternal security. Arminius

believed that election was determined by man's response to God's offer of salvation; that man could lose his status with God by later rejecting His offer; that keeping power is based on man's obedience. The following represent the arguments of Arminianism (McKinley, 1959, p. 44ff):

- “Keeping power is conditional, not unconditional. One must obey to be kept” (p. 44). In referring to 1 John 3:9, McKinley says, “Salvation is conditioned upon obedience and faith. There is no definite statement of unconditional grace here” (p. 47).
- Triumphs (are limited) to those ‘who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit’ (p. 47).
- “. . . the horrible decrees of election of some to be saved and some to be lost, which is flatly contradicted by God’s ‘whomsoever will calls’ found in Scripture (p. 48).
- In referring to John 10:27-28, McKinley says: “the plucking is from without and not within our own free wills . . . If faith is a condition of becoming a sheep, it is a condition of remaining a sheep” (p. 48).
- In referring to 1 Peter 1:5, McKinley says, “. . . that God’s keeping power . . . (is) very definitely conditioned on ‘faith’ and committing ourselves to God” (p. 49).
- McKinley: “Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall,’ which flatly contradicts the thought of unconditional security” (p. 50).
- “No earnest Christian could ever want Christ to keep him secure while he goes on committing willful sin . . .” (p. 51).
- In referring to Revelation 3:11, “Crowns” refer to eternal inheritance . . . receiving a crown of life is conditional on being faithful unto death” (p. 64). Crowns are rewards, not merits.
- Verses that demonstrate perseverance according to McKinley: (Matthew 24:13; Mark 13:13; Matthew 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13; Acts 14:22; Romans 2:6-8; 1 Corinthians 9:27; 1 Timothy 6:12-19; 2 Timothy 2:12; Galatians 6:9; Jude 20; Hebrews 3:12-14; Hebrews 10:35-39; Revelation 2:10; 3:11)

### **REASONS TO BELIEVE IN ETERNAL SECURITY**

**The nature of election** (Ephesians 1:4): Our faith, our conversion, and our sins did not take God by surprise. He appointed our election, our faith, and our temptations (Ephesians 1:4; 2:8, 9; 1 Peter 1:2). His child's success will glorify Him as well as His child's failures. Salvation is God's choice, and He makes no wrong choices. Election is not based on God's knowledge. He knows because He elects. Election is not based on man's response. God did not choose us because He knew we would choose Him. It is because He elected us, we chose Him.

1. **The nature of propitiation:** If there is doubt about how salvation is **attained**, there will be doubt about how salvation can be **maintained** (Stanley, 2002, p. 26).
2. **Salvation is God's work, not man's. *While salvation comes to the unworthy, it does not come to the unrepentant.*** While salvation comes to those who have saving faith, saving faith is not the basis of man's salvation. It is not faith that saves a man, but Christ's accomplishments at Calvary that saves a man. God was propitiated in Christ and He is totally satisfied with the transactions that took place at

Calvary (Romans 3:24ff). Salvation rests, not in the quality of one's faith, but the quality of His faithfulness.

3. **The efficacy of Christ's work.** When Christ died, how many sins did He die for? When Christ died, all our sins were in the future. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that He paid for all our sins (past, present, and future to our time) by one righteous act at Calvary (Romans 5:16f)
4. **The object of justification:** God justifies the wicked, not the righteous (Romans 4:5). That is, he does not justify men because of improvement in their condition, He justifies men because of an improvement in their position. Justification is not experiential; it is a legal, forensic, position in the sight of the Court. Righteousness is first imputed (justification), and then it is implanted (regeneration). Justification is not based on regeneration, a change, or on experience in the life of the believer. It is based on his confidence in the work of Christ on his behalf.
5. **The nature of justification:** Justification is an official declaration of a court. In biblical terms, judgment is an eschatological event. The blessing of the kingdom (justification) have been thrust into the present experience by the redemption of Christ to declare the ultimate verdict of "*justified*" to those who seek shelter from judgment under the covering of the cross. This is the ultimate Court, the ultimate verdict, and the final decision:

*Romans 8:33 Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.*

6. **The nature of regeneration:** Some see "*regeneration*" as a quacking that enables a man to believe. This is true. But, in this discussion "*regeneration*" refers to a rebirth that changes one's character.
7. Two important realities begin at the moment of trust. First, righteousness is imputed to the account of the new believer without a change in the believer's condition (Romans 4:5) and second, he is baptized or placed "*into Christ*" (Romans 6:3ff). Though justification and regeneration happen simultaneously, they have a logical order.
8. First, the believer is "*declared righteous*," (justification), and second, the believer is "*made righteous*" (regeneration); that is, the believer is "*born of God*." He becomes a child of God by the indwelling of the Spirit of God. Regeneration begins a change in the believer's *condition* that is experiential and heart felt -- a change so real that his nature is changed forever (Romans 6:2). God's seed is permanently in the heart of man. For this reason believers are called "*children of God*" (Ephesians 5:1-2), "*saints*" (1 Corinthians 1:2), a "*new creation*" (2 Corinthians 5:17), a "*holy temple*" (Ephesians 2:21-22) a "*holy priesthood*" (1 Peter 2:5), a "*holy nation*" (1 Peter 2:9), and "*made righteous*" (Romans 5:19).

*Regeneration* has a broad definition and a narrow definition in Christian circles. Some would say that regeneration comes first, then justification; others place justification first, then regeneration. This debate is called the ***ordu salutis***, or order of salvation. While there is a pre-salvic work that prepares the heart to receive Christ, the order of salvation is (a) justification, and (b) regeneration. Justification is **not** based upon a change in character, but upon faith in Christ, which produces a change in character.

If *regeneration* is the basis of *justification*, then it is conceivable to think that a person could be "*unjustified*," that is, if there is not sufficient "*change*," a person could be called back into Court for further adjudication. Justification is a pronouncement by the Court, not conversion in Court. Regeneration

is not the reason the Judge says a believer is justified! A man is not justified because he is born again; because he is justified, he is born again.

It is conceivable a person could be “*unborn*” if regeneration was legal and forensic, but it is inconceivable to be “unborn” if regeneration is a fact of spiritual existence.

For example: a couple can discuss having children (the idea stage) and they can change their minds (idea stage), but once conception is achieved, mental gymnastics cannot undo the pregnancy. The same is true of a believer. Salvation is *first mental* (a change of mind, a trust) *and legal* (A change in God's mind); secondly, it is substantial and experiential because the Holy Spirit inseminates spiritual life into the heart of the believer. Regeneration is irreversible. Once born in the Spirit, one cannot be unborn.

9. **The nature of the condition of salvation:** Salvation is based on two responses from man: repentance and faith. These are like two sides of a coin. You cannot have one without the other. Repentance is a “change of mind” about sin. Faith is a “change of mind” about Christ. The former rejects sin (Isaiah 53:6), and the latter embraces Christ. Repentance shuns “self-will,” and faith yields “to His will.” Repentance must deal with Christ as Lord now at the right hand of God; faith must deal with Christ's history; that is, His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 10:9; Romans 15:1-4). Salvation has nothing to do with man's actions, and everything to do with God's actions in Christ. Though works is an *evidence* of salvation, salvation is not *based* on human works. If good works maintains salvation, what is the difference then from being saved by good works?
10. **The nature of God:** God is light (1 John 1:5) and God is love (1 John 4:8). His love was satisfied with His Son's life. His holiness was satisfied by His Son's death (Romans 3:27ff). God loves His Son, but He did not spare Him to save you and me. It is unthinkable to believe that any of those who seek refuge in Him could ever be rejected. In God's eyes, all his children are justified and glorified—even the ornery ones (Romans 8:30).
11. **God is able to keep His people** (2 Timothy 1:12). He is free to keep His people (Romans 3:28f; 8:1). He has provided advocacy for His people (1 John 2:1; Hebrews 7:25; 4:16). He is involved in disciplining His children as a responsible Father (Hebrews 12). He promises to keep His people (Hebrews 8:6-12; Luke 22:20; Romans 4:25; John 3:14). He cannot lie (Titus 1:2).
12. **The nature of grace:** Grace is “undeserved favor.” All men deserve hell; none deserve heaven. No one will be in heaven because they deserve it. People are in heaven because God chose them to be His people. This is grace. Salvation is obtained by grace. It is not attained by human effort . . . or human choice. This is not cheap grace. There was nothing cheap about sacrificing the Son. Admittedly, while God's grace comes on the unworthy, it does not come on the rebellious! He saves us, not because we are good, but because He is good.
13. **The nature of a “gift:”** Salvation is a free gift, free to us; but it was not free to God. His gift cost Him everything! Gifts are different from rewards. Rewards are earned; gifts are bestowed.
14. **The argument of silence:** No individual in Scripture is said to have lost his salvation. No one is said to “be unborn,” to have lost eternal life, to have justification withdrawn, to have his name removed from the Lamb's Book of Life, to be dismembered from the body of Christ, or to have lost his robe of righteousness. Furthermore, there is not a single statement that tells us how and when a person could lose his salvation.

In conclusion, eternal security is an assurance that flows out of understanding the cross. However, there is no assurance for a rebel or one who walks in the ways of sinful men.

### **PRINCIPLES FOR TROUBLED SOULS**

The troubled soul must distinguish between safety, assurance of safety, and the enjoyment of safety.

#### **It is the blood that makes us safe (Romans 5:9, Hebrews 9, 10).**

By way of illustration, let's say you could be transported back in time to Egypt at the first Passover. You observe three families. The **first family** put blood on the door but was extremely confident the entire household would be safe from the death angel. The **second family** put blood on the doorpost, but all were extremely anxious and nervous about whether the firstborn would be spared. The **third family** was extremely confident that they would be safe because they were descendants of Abraham; therefore, they did not put blood on the door.

Which families were safe? The answer of course is that the first two families were protected, and the third family lost their firstborn. What saved family one and two: the blood on the door or confidence in the blood on the door? Of course, it was the sprinkled blood that saved both. We must distinguish between safety and assurance. Safety is based on shed blood. Assurance is based on confidence in the Word of God.

#### **It is faith in God's Word that makes us sure.**

*Psalm 119:89 Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in heaven.*

*Numbers 23:19 Has he spoken, and shall He not do it.*

Suppose the town gossip who is known for her tall tales comes to your home and says, "Old man, Jenkins just died and left you a million dollars? Would you believe her? Probably not! Why? Because you have learned the old woman cannot be trusted. But, suppose old man Jenkins' lawyer came to the door, a man of impeccable character, and informed you that old man Jenkins died and left you a million dollars. Would you believe him? Yes, you would be more inclined to believe him because of his profession and relationship to old man Jenkins. Assurance is built on the character of the one making the claim. If it were just enthusiastic preachers telling you that you are saved, safe, and destined to heaven, you might have cause for doubt. But if God, who cannot lie (Titus 1:2-3), says you are saved, justified, forgiven, and have eternal life, you have every cause to have assurance. In fact, if you do not have assurance, you are calling God a liar: "Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son." (1 John 5:10). Faith in his Word produces surety. Doubt does not affect one's safety, but it does effect one's assurance. The blood makes us safe. Faith makes us sure.

#### **Obedience brings joy.**

We must **not** confuse safety, assurance, and joy. Safety is based on the blood; assurance is based on faith in God's Word; Joy is founded on faith that leads to obedience.

*John 15:10-11 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

By way of illustration we know that a child that is born into a family is entitled to be in the Father's house and to his provision for the family. But, let say that because of the child's naughtiness, dessert is withheld from a disobedient child. What is the issue: safety in the home, assurance one is a member of the family, or enjoyment of dessert? If the child had obeyed his father, he would be enjoying desert, but since he disobeyed, it was taken away from him. It is the same in God's family. Joy in the relationship is based on one's obedience to the will of God. When one disobeys, guilt, fear, and discipline enter the life of God's child—but, he never ceases to be God's child. God has lots of misbehaving children.

In summary, the believer must distinguish between the basis of safety; the cause of assurance; and the reason for joy. The believer is safe because of the blood of Christ; assured of safety because of God's Word; and, enjoys his salvation because he obeys the family rules.

### **VISIBLE ASSURANCE ONE IS A TRUE CHRISTIAN**

- Confession of His Christ & Lordship (Romans 10:9-10; 1 John 4).
- Reliance on the work of Christ as the hope of salvation.
- Fellowship with God's people (1 John 1:5).
- Obedience to God (1 John 2:3).
- Lifestyle of righteousness (1 John 2:29).
- Love for God's people (1 John 3:14).
- Joy in the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 1:6).

### **OBJECTIONS AND ANSWERS**

Armenians object to the doctrine of eternal security based in part because of the following verses (McKinley, O. G. (1959). Where Two Creeds Meet. Kansas City, MI: Beacon Hill Press.).

***Revelation 3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.***

Proposition: The term “*crown*” signifies eternal inheritance, and the believer is plainly warned that his crown can be taken away. (p. 64).

Answer: McKinley misinterprets the “*crown*.” The “*crown*” does not represent eternal life or one's eternal inheritance. It is a metaphor for reward: Revelation 22:12 says, “*And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me.*” Crowns are a symbol of reward, not salvation. A Christian can lose his reward, but not his salvation.

***Mark 13:13 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.***

Proposition: Endurance is necessary to be saved. “*The end*” is a reference to the “end of life” (. 64).

Answer: Perseverance is a mark of faith. On this we agree. This passage, however, is not about eternal salvation but surviving the Romans invasion of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

***1 Corinthians 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.***

Proposition: McKinley says the Greek word “castaway” means “unapproved, rejected, worthless, and reprobate.” This infers, not the man’s works, but the man himself would be rejected.

Answer: Paul is talking about himself as a minister of the gospel (“*For though I preach the gospel*”). His concern is that if he gets sloppy in his service, he might not only lose his reward, but he might lose the privilege of serving in the gospel ministry. “*For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward,*” said Paul (1 Corinthians 9:17). The whole context is one of service, and the privilege of ministry. One can lose his ministry, but he can’t lose his salvation.

***Hebrews 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.***

Proposition: This passage is speaking to “*holy brethren*.” It is possible to have evil heart and depart from the living God (64).

Answer: The warning is real. It is possible to turn from God, to wreck one’s life, to fall into a daze of unbelief, and to lose one’s testimony, confidence, and reward. But, nothing is said about losing one’s salvation. Paul is concerned that these harassed believers enter into the benefits: (the promise: 4:1) of the gospel, (“*the rest*” 4:9—a cessation of trust in his own works-4:10), and through faith (a settled confidence of the truth of Christ). By the use of the “if,” a 3rd class conditional clause, the author expresses uncertainty whether some of the people would enter salvation rest. A true believer can lose his rest and peace, but not his salvation.

***Hebrews 6:6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.***

Proposition: People can fall away and lose their salvation.

Answer: The author is addressing believers, but in verse three he changes objects of discussion from “*we*” to “*those*.” Who are the “*those*” mentioned? The “*those*” are Jews of the nation of Israel who fell back into Judaism after having collectively, existentially witnessed the marvels of the age to come. If they were not led to faith by the personal visitation of the Messiah in their midst, how could they possibly be convinced of the gospel through post-resurrection preaching? Jesus was God’s greatest witness. If men reject the greatest Light, what hope is there that they will ever truly see light reflected through eye-witness testimony? The issue here is not losing one’s salvation, but rejecting the messianic mission. In conclusion, the author changes the object of discussion to “*We are persuaded of better things of you, things that accompany salvation*” indicating the addressees were of a different class.

***Hebrews 10:26 For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,***

Proposition: If a person sins willfully, Christ’s atonement doesn’t apply to that sin.

Answer: The willful sin is defined, “*who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*” The “*we*” is a literary device where the author speaks on behalf of Jews who heard all about



Jesus, yet reject His witness. The “*knowledge of the truth*” is the revelation of the redemptive work of Christ. “*No more sacrifice*” means that if the Jew rejects Jesus as God’s Lamb, then there is no other God-appointed, eternal, efficacious provision for dealing with man’s sin problem. Jesus is God’s solution. Reject him, and one rejects God’s only solution for sin.

The willful sin is that of a Jew who turns his back from the spiritual, simplicity of Christianity to go back under the complex, visible Levitical system of sacrifices. To return to the Levitical sacrifices is to turn from “*so great a salvation*” and to turn back to a system that cannot deal with man’s sin. Notice the “No Mores” in this chapter:

- NO MORE OFFERING FOR SIN: This is Christ’s part.
- NO MORE CONSCIENCE OF SINS: This is the believer’s part.
- NO MORE REMEMBRANCE OF SINS: This is God’s part.
- NO MORE SACRIFICE FOR SINS: This is the unbeliever’s part.

***2 Peter 2:20-23 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.***

Proposition: Some men have turned from the way of righteousness and lost their salvation.

Answer: Peter is addressing apostates. Peter calls them “*dogs*.” God’s people are called “*sheep*” **not** “*dogs*.” These people appear to have affirmed the Christian message, but never truly appropriated it. They cleaned up their behavior, but not their heart. The whole context of the chapter is God’s punishment of false prophets. He calls these people “*wicked*,” “*brute beast*,” “*wells without water*,” “*dogs*,” and “*sows*,” but he does not call them *sheep*. These people danced with Christianity for a season, but returned to their true love, the vomit of the world.

***Revelation 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.***

Proposition: a person’s name can be blotted out of the book of life.

Answer: This verse is not a warning. It is a consolation. He does not say people will be blotted out. Rather, John says, “They will **not** be blotted out.”

### **I WILL NOT FORSAKE YOU**

***Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.***

When we suffer, we are prone to think God has forsaken us. Sometimes the pressures of life have more bearing on our souls than the Word of God. When we respond this way, we are guilty of **not** taking sufficient comfort from the promises of Scripture.

Few things are more important than money. Someone said, "When it comes to money we are all of the same religion." The first phrase, "*Let your conservation be without covetousness*" reveals that many of our feelings of being forsaken are related to an overt concern about money and the lack of it.

The word "*content*" is a present participle implying that we need to constantly realize that God's daily grace is sufficient for us and to exercise the attitude of gratitude. It is the same word used by John the Baptist when he told the soldiers to be content with their wages (Luke 3:14).

The statement, "*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*" can only be fully appreciated by looking at the Greek. The verb "*leave*" is a word used to describe the untying of the ropes of a ship resting at dock before it sets sail in the ocean. Further, the verb is an aorist subjunctive meaning that it is impossible that God will ever initiate a process to untie the knot that binds us to Him. The verb "*forsake*" is the same word Jesus used on the cross when suffering for our sins, "God why have you forsaken me?" "*Forsake*" is also an aorist subjunctive and when combined with negation refers to the impossibility of the matter. Jesus was forsaken on the cross for our sins so that we might never, ever be forsaken by God because of our sins.

**There are five negatives in this verse.** The negative "*ou*" is used in a question when a positive answer is expected. The negative *mh*, is used in a question when a negative answer is expected. The use of these combined negatives is the most powerful way of expressing negation. The text could be translated, "*I will never, never untie the ropes that bind you to me nor ever, ever forsake you.*"

The word "*helper*" is a Greek translation of the Hebrew word *ezar* ("*help meet*") in Genesis 2:18. What a strong, faithful wife is to a fragile man, God is ten times more to our troubled souls.

The promise is given so that we may **BOLDLY** say the Lord is MY EZAR; and, therefore, I will not fear what man can do to me! The word "*phobia*" comes from the Greek word "fear." Fear of financial failure in the future haunts many of us and causes us to doubt God's love for us now. The battle with fear on the inside is often greater than the battle with finances on the outside. The promise is given so we may increase in **BOLDNESS** and inspired confidence. A lack of confidence of God's presence in the midst of trials means that we are not taking sufficient comfort from God's promises. God wants us to be like the duck calmly sitting on the surface of the water and paddling like crazy to reach the current of God's promises. When in doubt, let us paddle toward the promise, "*I will never, never untie the ropes that bind you to me nor ever, ever forsake you.*"

## 69. THE BLESSING OF AMAZING GRACE

*Romans 1:7 Grace to you . . .*

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ asserts the high place of God's law. He did not come to destroy it but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17-20). Christ is the end of the law<sup>67</sup> (Romans 10:4), but Christ is not the end of grace because grace springs from the eternal attributes of God. There is law in grace, but there is no salvation by law in grace. Grace is **not** the opposite of law. The opposite of law is **lawlessness**. This is a paradox. Therefore, we want to contrast a man under law (pre-cross) and a man under grace (after the cross).

Because the *law* represents the character of God, and since the character of God is the standard for righteousness in the New Testament, the ethics of *law* and *grace* are similar, but the systems are different. *Law* can refer to the moral code of Moses, or law can refer to the Levitical system of law that mediates between God and man, and sometimes the term “*law*” refers to Judaism and its entrapments. When the Scripture contrasts *law* and *grace*, it is not referring to the moral standards of law, **but law as a mediatorial system.**

**Figure 12**

| LAW AS A MEDIATORIAL SYSTEM                          | GRACE WITH CHRIST AS MEDIATOR                 |
|--|---|
| Justice: the demands of law must be paid             | Justice: the demands of law must be paid      |
| The standard of righteous is the Law                 | The standard of righteous is the Law          |
| The Levitical System satisfied the claims of justice | Christ satisfied the claims of divine justice |
| The Levitical system of sacrifices                   | The sacrifice of Christ                       |
| The shed blood of animals                            | The shed blood of Christ                      |
| System of rewards                                    | System of gifts                               |
| Do this and live                                     | Believe and live                              |
| Sign: Circumcision                                   | Sign of acceptance: Baptism                   |
| Rewards are merited by acts                          | Gifts are acts of love                        |

<sup>67</sup> The text says that Christ is the end of the law. The word “*end*” is the Greek word “*telos*.” It can be translated “end,” “conclusion,” or “mature.” In saying Christ is the end of the Law, Paul meant that our Lord is the perfection of the law, the completion of the law, the model of the Law, and that His life is the sum total of all that the law required.

|  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| Works seek acceptance                        | Acceptance leads to works  |
| Works justifies the righteous                | Grace justifies the sinner |
| Costly for the sinner                        | Costly for God             |
| Unable to continually cleanse the conscience | Cleanses the conscience    |

### **BASIC ERRORS REGARDING LAW**

- **Ignoring God's law;** that is, treating the Law of God as irrelevant to this life. This is the error of modern, humanistic man; and, the error of antinomians.
- **Adjusting an interpretation of the law to fit man's moral weakness;** i.e. permitting cultural trends to dictate the interpretation of God's Word. This was the error of the Pharisees (Matthew 5:19ff).
- **Radical discontinuity:** Failing to make proper application of the moral law by consigning it to a former dispensation. This error is common in classical dispensationalism wherein dispensationalists erect a wall between the OT practices and the NT living. This produces a casualness regarding the law's demand. Such thinking fails to grasp or properly define the continuity of OT law into the NT age.
- **Radical continuity:** This position takes the cultic laws of Israel and insists the feasts and dietary laws and many Levitical practices have merit and application to the Christians today; that is, Judaizing the church.
- **Legalism:** Demanding that law keeping is necessary for salvation. This was the error of the legalists in Galatians 2. Fortunately, dispensationalism and most Evangelicals have avoided this entrapment and are strong proponents of grace.
- **Asserting that the Levitical law is necessary for** sanctification (Galatians 5:4-6). This anomaly is related to the *Galatian error*. The Galatians insisted that law as **Judaism** defined its practice was necessary for sanctification (Galatians 3:1-3); i.e. Judaistic law-keeping is an essential component in a holiness objective. Paul dissuades the Galatians of returning to Levitical law or Jewish tradition as a means to perfection or devotion to Christ.

### **ERRORS REGARDING GRACE**

- **Mixing Levitical law and grace.** This is called *legalism* (Romans 11:6 & Galatians 5:4).
- Turning the grace of God into a license for immorality. This is called *cheap grace* (Jude 4).

### **VERSES ON GRACE**

*Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

*Romans 3:24 Being justified freely by his **grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

*Romans 4:4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of **grace**, but of debt.*

*Romans 5:15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the **grace** of God, and the gift by **grace**, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.*

*Romans 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under **grace**.*

*Romans 11:6 And if by **grace**, then is it no more of works: otherwise **grace** is no more **grace**. But if it be of works, then is it no more **grace**: otherwise work is no more work.*

*2 Corinthians 8:9 For ye know the **grace** of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

*2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all **grace** abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work*

### **MEANING OF THE WORD GRACE**

The word “grace” in Hebrew (lx, khane) means *favor* or *kindness*. It is connected to God’s love and goodness, His royal *hesed* (Ds.x) in the OT. In the NT, grace is portrayed as God’s unmerited favor toward sinners. God’s grace (ca,rij, charis) is the motivation for salvation. Grace explains why God sent His Son to die for sinful men in order that believers might be saved from His judgment (Titus 2:13).



G.R.A.C.E. has been called God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense.

### **THE LOCUS OF GRACE**

The locus of God’s grace is not the human heart, but Calvary.

**Figure 13: Ecstasy of St. Teresa**

**First and foremost, grace is something outside of man. Grace is the gift of God’s Son and His work for lost sinners revealed at Calvary. By this, we are not saying that God does not give sanctifying grace or that He does not graciously change the heart. We are saying that grace is fundamentally the work of God at the cross (Romans 3:24).**

Roman Catholicism (RC) made **the heart**, **not** the cross, the primary locus of grace. In the RC system, grace is needed to change the heart so Christ can work through the man to produce works pleasing to God: “the just will persevere in grace and merit eternal life” (Fifteen Promises of the Blessed Virgin, No.

6), and “Every work of grace, every increase of grace, is a work of the Holy Spirit” (Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Rosary).

When men shift *the locus of grace* from the cross to the *heart*, they place emphasis on the “*new birth*” as the means of salvation instead of the work of redemption at Calvary as the means of salvation. Men are saved, not because they change, but because Christ died for them. When men believe in Jesus, they do change, but that change is not the basis of salvation. The Spirit ALWAYS turns men away from self to view the wonder of cross, from looking “inside” to looking outside themselves to brazen serpent, our precious Lord and His work (John 3:14-15).

### **AND ILLUSTRATION OF GRACE**

When a person works and receives compensation for work, this is called a **wage**. When a person wins a race and receives a prize, this is called a **trophy**. When a person performs a great achievement and is honored for it, this is called an **award**. But when a person is not capable of earning a wage, or winning a prize, or deserving of an award -- yet receives such a gift anyway -- that is **grace**.

### **THE NATURE OF GRACE**

- Divine grace is the extension of the love of God to unworthy men because of the worthiness of his Son.
- Divine grace is the choice of God to redeem men because Christ made a choice to be the Redeemer.
- Divine grace is God's unmerited favor to man because Christ merited favor with His Father.
- Divine grace is God's offer of salvation to unworthy men because Christ proved himself worthy as a Son.
- Divine grace is the works and obedience of Christ credited to disobedient men because one man's act of obedience fully satisfied the claims of Divine justice.
- The primary work of Divine grace is not God's work exerted in us, but God's work outside of us in Christ at Calvary. God does not choose to be gracious to us because of a change in our heart, or the activity of faith in the soul, or because we are born again, or because we are gracious. God loves us not because of who we are but Who He is—a God of love. **God so loved the world that He gave His Son.**
- God is not gracious to us because we have been born again. But, because He is gracious, we are born again. We must distinguish the cause (Christ) from the result (regeneration). Secondly, grace is given to individuals for sanctification. For this reason Paul says, “Grace and peace” to you in the introduction of his letters.
- Divine grace flows to man, not because God ignores His justice, but because He expressed His justice at the cross. In being gracious, God did not ignore sin, or ignore His law, or dispense with justice. The opposite is true. It is because God fulfilled His justice at the cross, that God is now able to extend mercy to sinners.

- Grace, therefore, is uncaused in the recipient. Grace cannot be earned because it is not a prize to be obtained. Grace is not given to good men; it is given to unworthy men. It is not bestowed because of human merit, but because of the merit of Christ. Because it cannot be gained by human merit, it cannot be withdrawn because of a lack of human merit.
- Grace is not bestowed because of a quality of faith in the heart of man. It is supplied because of the quality of the faithfulness in the heart of Christ<sup>68</sup>. It is not given because of the quality of life, devotion of mind, or pureness of heart of men, but because of the life, devotion, and purity of our Lord. Grace is not conferred because man repents. Repentant souls may find grace, but repentance is never the cause of grace. The cause of grace rests wholly in the Giver!!
- Grace cannot be decreased because of unworthiness. Our worthiness is not the reason for an increase of grace, nor is our unworthiness the cause of what we perceive to be a withdrawal of grace in our lives.
- ***Grace triumphs in the presence of human weakness, and it ceases to be grace if it is withdrawn because of human failure.*** God will not dispense more grace if we sin less nor will he decrease grace if we sin more. It cannot be increased because of merit or decreased because of a lack of merit. It is not less if we sin less, or more if we obey more.
- Grace is not an overpayment of a debt. It is not a bonus thrown in as the result of a transaction. Grace is not treating a man as he deserves, or treating him better than he deserves. It treats him graciously without regards to his merits or demerits.
- Grace cannot be paid back because grace does not accumulate debt. God does not bestow grace in order to get something back from men. ***In being gracious no service is requested, no compensation expected, and no offering collected.*** All attempts to repay grace denigrate this beautiful act to a shabby barter & trade show. Service is rendered, not out of necessity among humanity, but out of the enormity of gratefulness within redeemed humanity. All acceptable service must proceed from thankfulness not need . . . not debt.
- ***Grace takes no risks, because grace expects nothing in return.*** Any attempt to miserably compensate God for the gift of His Son is a slap in the face. It like being given a Lincoln Town Car, and then offering the giver a dollar for his kindness. Therefore, all service rendered to God must also be rendered graciously, that is, out of a thankful heart and not out of duty in the mind.
- ***Grace is not free.*** Though grace is given so that it does not cost us anything to us, men must keep in mind that it cost God everything. The result of God's grace is man's salvation. Salvation is given to believing men as a free gift, but it was secured exclusively through the costly work of God's only Son.
- Grace delivers the imperative, not so men can be accepted in God's sight, but because men are accepted in God's sight. The imperative does not define what saved men should be. Men are not defined by what they do, but by who they are. Because God has recreated men (2 Corinthians 5:17),

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<sup>68</sup> See the ablative agency in Romans 3:22. The phrase "believe in Christ" is a subjective genitive (ablative of agency) and should be translated "faithfulness of Christ."

his imperative appeals to the new creation, not to extract reluctant love. He calls thankful hearts into action. Service is the result of thankfulness, not necessity; of a proper response to grace, not law and punishment.

- God loves, not because of who we are, but because of who He is—a God of love and grace.

### **GRACE PERSONALIZED**

Use of the pronoun “I” is used in a literary sense to represent all believers.

- I am loved, not because of who I am, but because of Who He is—a God of love (1 John 4:8ff).
- As to my past life, it does not exist before God: I died with Christ at Calvary, and I am now alive to God in Christ (Romans 6:9-11). My future is glorious because I now share in the life of Christ.
- I am not on probation: I am not out on parole. I am not in danger of losing my freedom because freedom is not conditioned upon my performance.
- Grace once extended to me will not be retracted because of me. God knows all about me. He loves me, not because of Who I am, but because of Who He is — a God of love. Even if I give God my very best, I am still unworthy of His grace. His grace is independent of me, and it is not dependent of what I do or do not do. *His grace is not bestowed because of human merit, nor is it withdrawn because of human failure.* Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace.
- My enjoyment of grace is totally dependent on my faith. When I believe, I really enjoy God's grace. When I am humble and consent to be love, I am enjoying grace; when I am proud and demand a reason to be loved, I am despising grace (Romans 15:13).
- I must not look *within* for reasons why God loves me. I must look *outside* of myself, at Calvary, to discern the reason why God loves me.
- Because I am enriched by grace, I have stopped trying to do something to earn God's love. The great secret of the Christian life is to allow myself to be loved knowing that I am unworthy of His love!
- Because I am enriched by God's grace, I have stopped looking *inside* myself for reasons why God should love me. The deepest theology that I know is that, “*Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.*” God's work *outside* me at the cross is the reason God loves me. My greatest need is to look at Calvary to understand the height, and length, and depth of God's infinite love, that is, “to know the love of Christ that passes knowledge” (Ephesians 3:19).
- Because God always loves me, I have *stopped judging circumstances* as evidence of His love. His chastisements are not indicators of a change in God's disposition toward me, but an evidence of his attentive care toward me (Hebrews 12:5ff). God's love is not defined by what my circumstances. His love is defined by Who He is—a God of love. What He does flows from His character. I must not judge God by my present condition, but by his eternal Revelation.
- Because I am under grace, I must stop seeking God's blessings. I must identify them and begin to give thanks for them. I cannot be more blessed because He has already blessed me with every spiritual blessing I heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3). I will not be more blessed if I obey more; but, if I obey, I



will enjoy more of His blessings. If I am going through a difficult time, it does not mean that I am loved less. I must learn to believe God loves me even though trials surround me. *"Before I was afflicted, I went astray"* (Psalm 119:67).

- Because I am graciously loved, I must stop looking for material blessings as the sign of God's love to me. God's blessings in the age of grace are spiritual (Ephesians 1:3). Having physical things is not an indication of God's favor any more than a lack of material things is an indication of His disfavor.
- Because I am smothered in grace, I can stop worrying about myself; however, I have many concerns about others.
- Because my life has been so richly impacted by grace, I must serve God, not because it is imperative that I do so, but because it is what thankful people do. Every response rendered by me must spring from my acceptance before God or it quickly degenerates into legalism — efforts to be accepted. It is not a necessity to serve God (legalism). It is a privilege to serve God (grace). Charity, not the command, is my primary motivation for service. Thankfulness inspires my actions. Legalists serve out of necessity; gracious souls serve out of generosity. Legalists are obliged to produce good deeds because God is Judge. Souls impacted by grace obey God's law because they understand His commands originate from His sovereignty and love. Jesus is our Lord and Savior. If I serve narrowly out the imperative, I am motivated by the fear of punishment. But, perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). If I love Him, I will obey Him. If I obey Him out of love, grace fuels the fires of devotion.  
***Service must spring from a grateful heart or it is not grace.***
- Because God loves out of His character, I must love out of my character. Just as God loves from Who He is and not because of who others are, I must learn to love others, not because of what they can do for me, but because of who I am—the one whom Jesus loves. I love out of who I am and what I am becoming, a person of love.
- I now serve the Lord with humility, not because I am better than other people, but because His love has not been withdrawn because of my many failures. Service is not a necessity for me. It is a great privilege for me. By the grace of God I have a ministry.

### **DISCOVERIES UNDER GRACE**

- Salvation is a gift, not a reward. It is free, but not cheap. It is available to all, but it is only received by a few. It offered to all, but efficient for the elect.
- Humility is realizing that I am safe, and that I am secure. I am accepted in God's sight while the unsaved man is not. But, I am not better than other men, more worthy than other men, more full of faith than other men. God has saved me not because I am good, but because his Son was good on my behalf. There is no room for pride in grace, but there is plenty of territory for thankfulness and humility.
- The Christian's joy is in the victory of Another. "To be disappointed with self is to have trusted in self" (Newell). The soul's delight rest firmly in the accomplishments of Christ and not in one's personal achievements. His victory was perfect and eternal, ours is imperfect and temporal. When we succeed, we are glad; and, when we fail we are sad; but, our joy is not increased more in our victory or decreased by our failure. The joy of the Lord is our strength. The joy of the Lord is the Father's

delight in the beauty and achievements of His Son. He is called "My food;" that is, Christ is the Father's Pleasure. Likewise, the beauty of Christ inspires our devotion. Depression comes to me because I am self-centered and not Christ-centered (Numbers 28:2; Nehemiah 8:10).

- Depression of soul comes not from failure of devotion, but because of unbelief. Discouragement comes, not from my lack of blessing, but from my lack of perceiving the blessings of Christ's perfect obedience on my behalf.
- Growth comes with Christ on the throne, and self on the cross: with rest, not effort; with trust, not striving;
- We change, not because we look inside to correct our inner faults. We change because we look away from self at Christ and behold His glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).
- The success in our life does not come from right choices; but from faith in the One who made the choice to be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippian 2:12).
- Commitment to serve comes not from the imperative in the Christian faith, but the discovery that blessing abides on us while we are unworthy and unlovely.

*Romans 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

- There is no fear in love. God does not motivate me by fear of punishment, but by grace. Likewise, if I create fear in others by what I do and say, I am not walking in love (1 John 4:18).

### **CHEAP GRACE**

The Scripture warns us to "Contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints for godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord" (Jude 3-4).

Not only is mixing Judaism and grace pernicious, but at the other end of spectrum is cheap grace -- grace without price, grace without cost. The idea is that since grace has been paid for in advance, it can be spent without limit and that a man can sin all he wants is cheap grace. ***Cheap grace is the justification of sin without justification of the sinner.***

- Cheap grace believes God saves men because they make the right choice.
- Cheap grace is blind and deaf. It can't see or hear what really happened at the cross.
- Cheap grace justifies lawlessness without justifying the law.
- Cheap grace preaches forgiveness without preaching repentance.
- Cheap grace is offering forgiveness without the death of Christ.
- Cheap grace is preaching love without the cross.
- Cheap grace preaches Christ as Savior without preaching him as Lord.

- Cheap grace grants a license to sin instead of power to do what is right.
- Cheap grace preaches freedom without responsibility.
- Cheap grace leads to immorality, while costly grace leads to holiness.

Grace is free because salvation cost us nothing, but it is expensive because it cost Christ everything. One can do nothing to merit salvation, but one can do a lot to tarnish it. It is grace because it justifies the sinner, but it is costly because it condemns sin. Grace is given to the weak, but it is not given to the unresponsive and unrepentant. To suggest that one can feed at the trough of iniquity while sipping up the broth of grace is a contradiction in terms. Though grace cost man nothing, and though it cannot be earned, it requires the sinner to release his grip on his life of sin . . . and it supplies the power to do so. To preach otherwise is cheap grace that justify sin, not the sinner.

### **MISSING THE GRACE OF GOD**

*Hebrews 12:14 Without holiness, no man will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God. . .*

One can miss the grace of God by failing to admit the depravity of one's own soul; by feeling that one is not that bad in his unregenerate state; by feeling that one is really a good person in and of himself; by feeling one really does not need all this religion; by feeling that salvation is about making the right spiritual choice; that he is a free man with the power to make the right spiritual choice.

If one tries to stand before God on his own merits, he will go to hell because he did not understand the merits of Christ. This error is called *legalism*. Legalism mixes law and grace. Only a proud, arrogant soul hopes to stand before God on his own merits and accomplishments.

One can also miss the grace of God by an insincere profession of faith, by reaching for forgiveness without repenting of sin, or by claiming Christ as Savior without confessing Christ as Lord. One can miss the grace of God, either by clinging to sin, or by clinging to his own devotion as the reason God should justify him.

### **A SUMMARY OF GRACE**

Gracious souls know that God loves them, not because of what they do, but because of Who God is—a God of love.

What God does, does not determine Who He is. Who He is determines what He does. He acts out of His character, not out of necessity. Likewise, love must spring from character, not compulsion. God commands us to love, not to define what we are, but because of who we are and what we are becoming—people of love. His commands appeal to the divine nature within us. Who we are determines what we do. Service does not define us. The man under grace does not love because it is imperative for him to do so. He loves because God has placed his love within his heart. Romans 5:3-5 comes before the great commands of Romans 12.

- Gracious souls do not seek to be more worthy in order to be loved, but consent to being loved though they are unworthy.

- Gracious souls have stopped trying to be good in order to be accepted because they know they are accepted because Christ is good.
- Gracious souls have stopped trying to gain acceptance by their performance because they know they have acceptance because of Christ's performance.
- Gracious souls no longer blame themselves because Christ took all their blame upon Himself.
- Gracious souls no longer determine their potential based on their past because they know their potential is based on their position in Christ in the present.
- Gracious souls do not believe they are products of the past, but what they believe about their past.
- Gracious souls have no shame about their past, because they know it is hidden at the cross.
- Gracious souls do not look to their past in despair because they are too occupied in the present with the glorious accomplishments of Christ on their behalf.
- Gracious souls overcome failure because they realize God will not withdraw His favor because of their failures.
- Gracious souls have a powerful prayer life for God because they understand they already have a right standing with God. The reason Christians pray is not to obtain a right standing with God, but because they have a right standing with Him by faith.
- Gracious souls serve Christ, **not** to be blessed, but because they are already blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3ff).
- Gracious souls do not strive to accomplish great things by being more devoted to Christ, but they accomplish great things because they are more believing in Christ. Discouragement comes, not because of a failure of devotion, but because of a failure to believe.
- Gracious souls overcome discouragement, not by trying to be the best before men, but by rejoicing that Christ was the best among men in the sight of His Father.

## 70. THE BLESSING OF HEALING

*James 5:16. . . that ye may be healed*

**The Book of James is about Christian maturity.** Mature Christians are ones who have been through the fires — the hot flames that God uses to purify a man into the image of Christ.

It is a book on maladies that afflict men in the course of life; and, therefore a manual for physicians of the soul.

But, what should a Christian do when he feels like he has been down a hundred miles of bad road and wants to give up?

James immediately sets before us three possible circumstances in which Christians may find themselves. The great lesson that *James wants us to grasp is that we need to allow OTHERS TO BE STRONG IN OUR WEAKNESS.*

***James 5:13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.***

The word “*afflicted*” (*kakopatheo*) is a combination of two Greek words, “*bad*” and “*feelings*” -- a reference to discouragement or emotional stress. It is translated “*hardship*” by Paul and “*suffering*” by James. We get the word “*bad*,” “*pathos*,” and “*compassion*” from this word.

**Q: What should a Christian do when he is suffering?**

When the storm on the inside of a man is often more terrifying than the storm on the outside, James says he should pray.

The word “*pray*” or “*prayer*” is used seven times in this passage. It is a present imperative verb. The use of the present tense suggests that a man in trouble should pray and keep on praying knowing the difference between saying prayers and praying.

After Jesus ascended into heaven the remaining disciples were “*continually devoting themselves to prayer*.” The vigil lasted ten days (Acts 1:14). The word “*continually devoting*” (*proskarterountes*) is a present, active participle, which is translated as “*continuing*” (Acts 2:46), “*constantly*” (Acts 8:13), and “*attendance*” (Acts 10:7). On the tenth day, the Holy Spirit came with such force and power over 3000 people committed their lives to Christ. Thus, the birth of the church was conceived in prayer.

Likewise, if a man is to stand on his feet during a trial, he must first get on his knees.

**Q: What should a Christian do if he is happy?**

James says, “*He is to sing praises*.” Note the present tense, that is, he should continue to sing praise. Praise is to God what grumbling is to the Devil. If complaining is the problem; praise is the cure. God dwells amidst the praises of His people, and praises strengthen the heart (Psalm 22:2). Praise and be pure or complain and be corrupted.

*James 5:9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.*

**Q: What should a Christian do if he is sick?**

***14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: 15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.***

Before we answer the question, we must expose two extreme positions on this subject. There are those who would lead us to believe that healing is always the will of God; that the kingdom of God has arrived in history and that a good Christian will never get sick or stay sick. This view can lead a person to a sense of guilt if he or a person he is praying for is not healed.

The second extreme view is an antithetical reaction to the first. This view holds that God does not exercise His healing power in this dispensation; that all healing awaits the arrival of the kingdom of God. This view can lead to hopelessness and despair.

A more balanced view keeps in mind that:

- (a) Christ is able, can, and does heal people today to the glory of God, but that He may not choose to do so for purposes known to himself. Paul received a thorn in the flesh and an abundance of grace to live with his affliction to the glory of God (2 Corinthians 12:9);
- (b) All healing is of God. From a tiny flesh wound to dreaded cancer, God is at work healing people;
- (c) There will be a time in each person's life when they will be afflicted with a disease that God will not heal in time;
- (d) Ultimate, final healing awaits the resurrection and the arrival of the kingdom of God in history.

**Q:** Since most of us know people for whom we have prayed and even been anointed with oil who have not been healed by prayer alone, how are we to reconcile such a strong promise in regards to prayer and healing?

**Q:** Is the problem our faith or is there something in this passage we do not understand?

**Q:** Should pastors and elders give medical advice and not encourage sick people to go to doctors?

**Q:** Is there something magical about "anointing" people with oil or is this religious hocus pocus?

The word "sick" in verse 14 (*astheneo*) is used 32 times in the New Testament -- an old verb meaning "to be weak" (Robertson). About half the time the word "astheneo" refers to physical sickness (the Gospels), and about half the time it refers to spiritual weakness or weariness of heart (the epistles) (Romans 4:19; 8:3; 14:1, 2).

The obvious problem in James is spiritual weakness that stresses out the body due to wrestling with the sins of the age: worldliness, war, conflicts, attacks of the Devil, pride, impatience, irritability, presumption, fraud, frustration, unbelief, and spiritual instability (James 4-5).

Remember the word of our Lord in Luke at the synagogue in Nazareth who came to "*heal the broken hearted,*" to deliver those held captive by sin, to restore sight to those who (spiritually) blind, and to set free those who are spiritually shattered because of sin.

*Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,*

*Isaiah 58:6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?*

**Q: what does James mean by the term "shall save the sick"?**

This is important because James emphatically says that a prayer of faith offered on behalf of the sick (*astheneo*) WILL RESTORE the one who is sick — **NO Exceptions are presented.**

**Q: Who is this “sick” person?**

I understand it to refer primarily to the individual who is experiencing spiritual weakness, that is, one who is weary and worn out due to the nature of afflictions going on in his life (James 4-5:1-8). I hold this view for the following reasons:

(a) James mentions the fact that many were experiencing various trials (:1:3ff; 2:3-5), lawsuits (2:6); problems with the tongue (3), fleshly wisdom (3:13), quarrels (4:1), wars with God (4:4), criticism of the brethren (4:11), arrogance (4:13), economic deprivation (5:4), and emotional stress (5:10) -- a failure to establish (make stable) the heart during unnerving trials including but not limited to being defrauded of one's income (5:8).

(b) Moreover, the word "sick" (*kamno*) means "weariness" or "discouragement" -- a reference to a tired soul weary of having to endure sin within and sin without. In Hebrews 12:3, Christians are warned about being “weary” (*kamno*) of heart. The word “weary” (*kamno*) is the word used for “sickness” in James 5:15. The use of *kamno* powerfully suggests *a state of spiritual exhaustion*, **not** a physical disease, malady, or infection.

(c) The problem in James 5 are *matters of the heart* in the midst of earthly troubles; penury, frustration, unbelief, complaining, and unbelief. Men are prone to seek remedies during financial affliction (fraud) than seek remedies for sins of the heart that arise because of monetary difficulties.

**The financial problem**

*James 5:4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.*

*Consider how frustration, anger, disappointment, fear, impatience impacted the man.*

**The spiritual need**

*James 5:8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. James called for patience because they were impatient; for long suffering because the workers were agitated; for spiritual stability because they were unstable; for faith because they were filled with doubt.*

These observations lead me to conclude that the “sick” were spiritually, mentally, and emotionally exhausted from trying to navigate their lives through the storms of life that included being defrauded by the withholding of wages and having to live in a state of penury (5:1-5), not that they had an incurable disease (“sickness” of the physical sort).

A tired Christian needs prayer. A saint afflicted by unbelief needs faith. James exhorts the exhausted to call for elders of the church together for prayer.

Do **not** hear what is not being said. The passage does **not** say we should not pray for those who are physically sick, but that we should realize the precise problem James was addressing -- *the problems of a weary warrior*.

**Q: What does it mean to “anoint with oil?”**

The word, "*anoint with oil*" also challenges our interpretation of the passage.

Some Christians see this as some type of ceremonial practice whereby a priest, pastor, or group of elders are suppose to ceremonially anoint the sick and then pray for them. This position is supported by the phrase, "*in the name of the Lord.*" Others see this as something practical or medicinal.

Though no one is hurt by a ceremonial anointing, I agree with the latter.

The word "*anoint*" is used eight times in the N.T. Four times it is used of Mary anointing the feet of Jesus—an esthetic act of love.

In Matthew 6:17, the one fasting was to anoint his head, that is, practically wash his face and groom himself (using oil).

In Mark 6:13, the disciples anointed the sick, but this could refer to natural, medicinal remedies.

In Mark 16:1, the women anointed Jesus' body—a practical burial custom of the day.

In the story of the Good Samaritan, he poured wine and oil into the wounds of the victim -- a first aide remedy of the time. Here it is plain that oil had a medicinal value. Even today, olive oil is used as a base to hold the properties of herbs.

Furthermore, the word "*anoint*" could mean "*rub*." I don't know about you, but after a busy day, a little foot rub or neck massage revitalizes my whole being. Possibly, James is calling the elders to not only pray for the weary, but ***to do what they can homeopathically to relieve the stress in this person's life.***

**The Promise:** This being the case, James promises spiritual healing: "*the prayer offered in faith shall restore the sick.*" The word "*sick*" (*kamno*) discussed previously is an unfortunate translation in this text. A better translation of the word would be "weary" or "discouraged."

The word "*shall save (sozo) the sick*" should be translated "rescue" or "keep safe" from danger.

The word "*shall raise (ageiro) him up*" means that he will be lifted up out of his state of depression. The idea is to be saved from weariness. Spiritual healing does not mean absence of problems, but the ability to be Christ-like in the midst of problems. It takes Christ-likeness to, "Count it all joy my brethren when you fall into various temptations" (1:3). Most of us are not very Christ-like when we are depressed and discouraged. Prayer is the agency of delivering weary men from exhaustion.

Notice how positive James is about the prayer of faith:

- "shall be saved" from weakness,
- shall be raised up,
- shall be forgiven.

**Spiritual healing has at least three conditions attached to it.**

**The First Condition of healing, is the prayer of faith.** The phrase, "*prayer of faith*" is a genitive. The idea here is that prayer is being offered to God on behalf of the discouraged that flows from a believing



heart. What does a discouraged Christian need? He needs faith, does he not? When believing men pray with the discouraged, God will use the faith of others to energize the weary -- that is, to raise him up.

James does **not** say the prayer of elders shall save the sick, but the prayer of faith shall save the sick. Not all "elders" have faith.

Notice, it is **not** the faith coming from the sick/weak/discouraged believer that promises restoration, but *the prayer of faith coming from the elders that is coupled to the promise*. From this we learn a very important principle. When we are going through some difficulty, *we need to be around people of faith*. We need to let others be strong in our weaknesses. There are days when we need to let others to be strong in faith when we are weak in faith, strong in hope when we are weak in hope, strong in prayer when we feel we can't pray. When the demons of unbelief invade our soul, James wants us to surround ourselves with angels of faith.

*The burden of faith is upon the petitioners (elders), and **not** upon the person being prayed for.* While it is helpful if the weary person has faith, *it is essential the petitioners have faith*. How dare we pray for a person and then place a guilt trip on the sick person for not having enough faith. How cruel!

***5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.***

**The second condition to healing is confession.** The command, "*confess your sins to one another*" suggests that the state of weariness could be due to sin's activity in the heart of the discouraged believer. If one has been dancing in a hog trough, the heart needs to be searched (Psalm 139:23) and sin confessed (Psalm 32; 51).

***James 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.***

Use of the term "*hands*" suggest the discouraged has been doing something wrong. In the law, there is a doctrine called "*the clean hands doctrine*" which refers to a petitioner who is free of crime. Thus, the unclean hands doctrine, is an equitable defense in law that prevents a party from receiving relief from a court if they have engaged in inequitable behavior. The same is true in prayer. The one seeking something from God must have clean hands. James is not advocating perfection, but a practical forsaking of known transgressions of God's law (Psalm 24:3-4). Look at the sins exposed in James 3, 4, 5.

James is encouraging the infirm to evaluate his condition and to be honest about why he is physically and spiritually weak. Discouragement often happens to us when we have a moral failure in our life, when relationships are disrupted due to our wrong emotional responses to people, and due to the activity of unbelief in our lives.

Confession of sin clears the way for God to forgive and bring healing in our life (Isaiah 55:7, 8; I John 1:9). But, James is not only encouraging confession on the part of the weary, but on the part of the prayer warriors. James is calling for 100% transparency by all who are doing the praying.

**The third condition for healing is prayer from "a righteous man."** The "*righteous man*" infers not only the sick, ***but the elders doing the praying***. James says the "working prayer" of a righteous man is "very powerful." But, what is a righteous man? A righteous man is a Christian. He is a man who has been justified by faith. He is a "fessed up" man, that is, he is one who is honest about his failures and keeps

short accounts with God through confession. He is a man who has “right” relationships in and out of church and one who practices his faith in the market place. He is a positive man praying to a positive God for a positive result.

In the context, the righteous man is an afflicted man who has not given himself over to unbelief, doubt, fear, anger, presumption, and slander.

***5:17-18 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.***

James offers Elijah as an example of a righteous man performing the duty of a prophet-elder in ancient Israel. Elijah was the bold, rugged prophet that called his idolatrous nation back to the Lord. Before Elijah's prayer was answered, he confronted wicked Ahab and ordered the execution of Jezebel's emasculated prophets. God listens to men who confront sin and offer up prayers on behalf of the distressed.

***5:19-20 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.***

"err from the truth" refers to the many sins mentioned in James 4 and 5. Modern men call it "backsliding" into the sins of the flesh or love of the world. Both immorality and worldliness hinder prayer. Thus, James is not talking about physical illness, but erring, swerving, and straying from the faith -- the truth.

The word "convert" can be translated "turn" -- a reference to repentance and restoration; getting one back on the narrow path of righteousness. The idea here is that the sick person is weary because matters of the conscience afflicted him -- a man who may have sins to forsake and confess.

"converth the sinner (harmateo)" refers to a believer "who has fallen short" or "missed the mark" or let go of the pursuit of holiness -- something easy to do when one is overwhelmed with the burdens of this life. If spiritual healing is to occur, faith must replace doubt; truth must occupy the house where lies moved in.

James addresses the whole congregation and challenges them to be involved in the ministry of reconciliation. Like sheep, many strayed from the truth. Like a shepherd sends his sheep dog into the briars and thickets to round up the strays, James exhorts the healthy to do the work of a sheep dog and to do the thorn-piercing work of turning straying sinners back to the Lord.

"Death" is probably a reference to "dead faith" in James 2:14 and not physical death. Possibly, those who are sick and weary were once active in the faith, but strayed. Now, their faith is weak and in danger of dying. They are like the modern Christian who sits on the back row and sings bass. When a person no longer works for the Lord, he works for the Devil. When he ceases to love the Lord, he loves the world (James 4:4). If a person is not praying, he is straying. If he is not praising, he is complaining. If he is not serving, he is sinning.

The great need today is for one-eyed, snaggle-toothed sheep dogs who will leave the comforts of the barn and go into the pasture and round up the strays. This duty is not assigned to the pastor alone, but to the "brethren."

In conclusion, we live in a world of changing circumstances. Each change demands a spiritual response. If we have trials, let us activate faith; if we are troubled, let us pray; if we are happy, let us sing; if we are weary, let us draw on the strength and faith of others.

## **71. THE BLESSING OF GLORIFICATION**

*Romans 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

### **DEFINITION**

- Greek: *Doxa* equals *glory*. It is used 225 times; 32 times by John.
- The term *doxology* means “glorious words.”
- The word *glorify* can mean “to declare glorious,” or “to make glorious,” or “to make honorable.” In justification, the believer is *declared* righteous; in sanctification, he is made righteous; and in glorification, he is made completely righteous. One day salvation will be complete and believers will experience glorification of spirit, soul, and body.
- As beauty is the expression of health, glory is the expression of holiness. Glorification begins by making our souls beautiful through regeneration. It is continued through the Spirit's work in sanctification. It is completed with the resurrection of a glorified body.

### **GLORY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

- Honor comes because of wealth (Psalm 49:16, 17; Matthew 6:29).
- Honor comes because of position (Genesis 45:13, Job 19:9)
- Honor comes because of character or honor is due because of one's accomplishments

### **GOD'S GLORY**

- Physical manifestation of glory (Isaiah 6:1-4).
- Moral excellence (Psalm 97:6; Isaiah 3:8; 42:8)
- His works glorify Him (Jeremiah 33:18, 19).

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GLORIFIED BODY**

This is the time that God will regenerate our bodies making them fit for the spirit. The old will be traded for the new; the corrupt for incorrupt (Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:1-2; 1 Corinthians 15:42-56).

The time of glory will arrive at the second coming: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).

- The body will be raised imperishable; i.e. not subject to decay (1 Corinthians 15:42).
- It will be glorious; i.e. not subject to the aging or marring process (43).
- It will be raised in power; i.e. it will be more powerful and have more abilities than it does now (43).
- It will be a spiritual body; i.e. it will be fit for the spirit and work in union with the spirit (44).
- It will be immortal; i.e. it will not be subject to death. It will not die (53-54).

And, all this will happen at the last trumpet at the *Parousia* of our Lord (52).

## FIVE POSSIBILITIES

There are five possible awards one can earn.

- **The crown of righteousness.** This is the reward for those who love Christ's appearing (2 Timothy 4:8).
- **The crown of joy.** This is the soul-winners crown (Philippians 4:1)
- **The incorruptible crown.** This is the crown given to those live a disciplined, holy life (1 Corinthians 9:25).
- **The crown of life.** This is given to those who die for Christ, or live their lives for Christ. (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10)
- **The crown of glory.** This is the crown given to those who shepherd God's flock with integrity (1 Peter 5:4).

## FIVE IMPOSSIBILITIES

Following the good news that in God's providence is working all things for the good of Christians, the Apostle Paul states the truth that those God has justified, he has also glorified (Romans 8:30). He speaks of justification and glorification as a fact in the mind of God by using the aorist—a completed action in the past. He then proceeds to state five impossibilities for the believer (Romans 8:31-38):

**First, it is impossible for a believer to have an unconquerable adversary:** "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (v. 31). This is arguably one of the greatest verses in the Bible. It was John Calvin's life verse.

**Mounce:**

*"Nowhere in the annals of sacred literature do we find anything to match the power and beauty of this remarkable paeon of praise."*

**William Newell** explains our difficulty in appreciating our text:

*Our weak hearts, prone to legalism and unbelief, receive these words with great difficulty: God is for us . . . They have failed Him; but He is for them. They are ignorant; but He is for them. They have not yet brought forth much fruit; but He is for them. (Romans 8: Expository Notes Verse by Verse)*

*You may assume that those of us who are always before the public speaking of the blessed promises of God are never downcast or heartbroken. You are mistaken. We have been there, and perhaps we know how to say a word in season to any who are now going through similar experiences. With many enterprises on my hands, far too great for my own unaided strength, I am often driven to fall flat on this promise of my God, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Unknown. Preceptaustin.org).*

**Newell** is correct! We are legalists by nature with a performance-based theology. We feel like God is for us when we are dutiful to our Christian responsibilities, and we feel God is against us when we sin and fail Him. We feel God's favor shines upon us when prosperity knocks at our door, and that God is against us when adversity storms our gate. With knowledge of His law our own weaknesses and failures fuel the furnace of doubt as to whether God is for us. The marvelous truth in this text is that God is greater than our weaknesses, greater than our sins, greater than our failures, greater than our disappointments, and greater than our adversaries. It is no test of faith to believe God is with us when we succeed and have money in the bank, but it is a test of faith to believe God is with us when we fail and our purse is empty. Thus, the great response of faith in Romans is to consent to be loved though unworthy; i.e. at all times, good and bad, to take sufficient comfort from the truth, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

"If God be for us" is a first class conditional in Greek and must be rendered, "Since God is for us . . ." "If God is for us" is not a question. The major premise is not in doubt. The question raised is rather an enemy can be equal to the power of Almighty God . . . and, the answer, of course, is a trumpet blast, "NO ONE!"

If the greatness and power of almighty God is on our side, who cares what the forces come against us? It is like African pygmies playing the Boston Celtics. Why even read the scouting report on the pygmies? I use have a classmate in sixth grade whose name was Sam. Sam wasn't very smart and he flunked two years in a row. He outweighed other students by 60 pounds. We soon discovered, that no matter the game, whoever had Sam on their side, won the game. Likewise, because Christ is our advocate, we're gonna win the game.

The opposite of this thought is also true: If God be against you, who can be for you? If you are God's enemy, your blessings are temporary and your troubles are permanent. Your pleasures are like the dew which quickly disappear and your pains are like boulders on your chest. Whether you have adversity or prosperity, so long as God is against you, you face eternal perils. Consider this: If God be against me, what then? What will become of me when eternity knocks at my door? What will happen to me when I die? How can I stand in the Day of Judgment? Just as there is certainty for the child of God that God is for him, there is certainty for the Christ-neglector that God is against him. Nothing he owns will shadow him from the fires of judgment.

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" Though earth, hell, and all their armies come against you, IF the Lord of Hosts surrounds your camp, you shall scatter them like toy soldiers. When Hezekiah went to bed in Jerusalem with the Assyrian army around his throat, he woke up to vultures feeding on the dead bodies Sennacherib's soldiers. Likewise, you shall know the favor of the Lord for all eternity.

**Second, it is impossible for a believer not to receive future blessings.** "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (v. 32). The Son is the most precious and valuable possession of God. If he did not spare his greatest jewel, shall we not inherit all His jewels? The "all things" refer to a future eschatological inheritance, that is, the resurrection of the body.

In providing His only Son as the sacrifice for our sins, God was showing His ultimate provision for our needs, even as foreshadowed in Genesis 22 where Abraham experienced the reality that it is the LORD Who Provides the Lamb on the Cross by the shadow of the ram caught in the thicket. The God who sees our needs and provides a lamb for our sins is known as Jehovah Jireh.

Notice the word "above" (*huper*). It means "above" or "in place of." Thus, we have the doctrine of substitution wrapped up in this preposition. Its use in Galatians 3:10 and 3:13 is interesting. The sinner is described as being "under" (**huper**) a curse (3:10); that is, like a wife of King Henry the VIII, our neck is on the block and we have an executioner holding a sword over our body ready to lop off our head. But, the text says, Christ became a "curse above (*huper*) us;" i.e. He stepped between us and the executioner and received the blow belonging to us. The sword reached him, but it did not touch us.

Notice the word "give" (*charizomai*). **MacArthur** picks up on the fact that *charizomai* includes the blessing of forgiveness.

*It therefore seems reasonable to interpret Paul's use of charizomai in Romans 8:32 as including the idea of God's gracious forgiveness as well as His gracious giving. If so, the apostle is also saying that God freely forgives us all things (cf. 1 John 1:9). God's unlimited forgiveness makes it impossible for a believer to sin himself out of God's grace. (MacArthur, J: Romans 1-8. Chicago: Moody Press or Logos)*

Considering the many uses the verb *charizomai*, it is reasonable to interpret passage as freely gives and freely forgives all things. Paul, the rhetorician, appeals to our sense of logic. If God has already given us the greatest gift (His Son), will He not give us the smaller ones? If He has already paid the ultimate price for our souls, will He hesitate to spend auxiliary fees for our simpler needs?

Finally, notice the question. It is framed with a negation. Like all of God's bundle of promises, they must be appropriated by faith to be enjoyed; that is, too many of us are not taking sufficient comfort from the promises of God. We're living like beggars fearful of where we are going to get our next meal. Genuine faith does not ask, "Can He?" or "How shall He?" but "How shall He **not**" give us all things?" Now that God has given us His Son, it's just **not possible not** to receive the rest of inheritance!!

**Third, it is impossible for a charge to be brought against us in God's court.** "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

A charge against God's elect? Paul takes us into the Courtroom. Before us is the Supreme Judge of the Universe. The books are opened. The Ten Commandments hang on the wall. Cases are being heard. Verdicts are given. Sentences are handed out. Then, you hear your name? The accuser steps forward with

piles of documents. You know him. He knows you! He questions your Christianity and preys the court to hear his complaint against you. The Judge says to the accuser, "You may proceed. What is your cause of action?" In a matter of minutes your accuser shares the most vile, embarrassing, damnable secrets of your life. You jaw drops open and fear sucks all the oxygen out of the Courtroom. Your knees knock and your fingers quiver. The real you has been discovered!

Suddenly, the Judge interrupts the accuser and says, "Enough? This case is dismissed! You have no standing in this courtroom. This case has already been tried." The judge looks at you and says, "You are free to go. Have a good day!" Still sweating and trembling, you manage to ramble out of the chambers looking for a bench where you can sit and recover. You find it . . . and begin to analyze what just happened. A verse comes to your mind, "Who shall anything to the charge of God's elect. It is God that justifieth!"

The word "*charge*" is legal parlance. It is the equivalent of an indictment based on probable cause—a violation of God's law which carries the death penalty. A charge must aver the facts and the law violated. A charge must be written in the form of a complaint. The complaint must be filed in court and a hearing requested. The Scripture is full of such proceedings (Psalm 50: Micah 6).

The term "*elect*" refers to one of God's children; that is, those who are the object of God's favor. And you, one of the elect, is a proposed party to the case. Moody once said the elect are the "who wills" and the non-elect are the "who will nots."

There is a great illustration of this in the life of Paul.

***Acts 25:24 And Festus said, "King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen here present with us, you behold this man about whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both at Jerusalem and here, loudly declaring that he ought not to live any longer.***

Just as Paul's accusers gained a hearing before Festus, stated their charges, and demanded the death penalty, the devil is the accuser of our souls. Oh, those voices inside us that say "*he should not live any longer!*" He accuses us with shouts of condemnation (Job 1:9, 10, 11 2:4, 5, 6; Zechariah 3:1-4; Revelation 12:10, 11; 1 Peter 5:8). This verse grants us permission to not listen to his voice. We must refuse the Devil's summons to hear these thoughts that condemn us, that shame us, that make us feel that there is no hope for us. These thoughts are like little sparrows flitting around us, but we don't have to let them build a nest in our mind. If God does not listen to the charges, neither should we!!

Again, who cares about the indictment of men? All charges were placed on Christ. If he died for our sins, there is none left for us to pay for. The judgment is complete. The believer has been declared righteous by the highest court in the land. Who is going to challenge the verdict? There is no double jeopardy. God's verdict is final -- and it is a verdict, not of "not guilty" but one of "justified" -- declared righteous.

**Fourth, it is impossible for a believer to be condemned:** "Who is he that condemmeth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God who maketh intercession for us" (v. 34). Who has not sinned and heard a powerful voice shouting, "guilty, guilty?" Guilt is a joy robber. While the Lord wants us to confess and forsake our sin, He doesn't want His people living on this earth with their heads hanging down, fearful of judgment, and suckin' on sour pickles because they fail Him. God is greater than a ringing conscience. Thus, we have the remedy for guilt in this verse.

There is no more terrible announcement to a guilty man than, "You are condemned!" Our English word "*condemnation*" fails to communicate the biting seriousness of the Biblical term. Our English word "*condemn*" can mean "disagreement" or "censor" or "disapprove." All our English nuances miscarry the true meaning and emotional impact of the Greek word "*condemnation*." The Greek term "*condemnation*" lugs a ten pound sledgehammer in its dispatchment. When a house is condemned, the wreckers tear it to the ground. When a sinner is condemned, he perishes in the fires of hell.

The word "*condemn*" comes from the Greek word, "*katakrino*" which is a combination of two Greek words: "*krino*" means "to give an opinion or to issue a judgment" and "*kata*" meaning "down." Thus, *katakrino* means to pass judgment down from the bench. It is a judicial term referring to a judge's decision to pronounce an adverse sentence after reaching a verdict; that is, to declare a lawbreaker guilty. It is the opposite of the word "justify." It is the last word an accused wants to hear. And, if pronounced it means all is lost.

Since Christ has paid all our sin, what sin is there left for us to pay? If he drank the wrath of God on our behalf, how much do we have to drink? If all our sins were placed on Christ, how many are still left on us? When asking for assurance of salvation, don't plead your religious experience, or even your faith. Plead the death of Christ!

**Spurgeon** said it well,

*If any confront you with other confidences, still keep to this almighty plea: "Christ has died."  
If one says, "I was christened and confirmed," answer him by saying, "Christ has died."  
Should another say, "I was baptized as an adult," let your confidence remain the same:  
"Christ has died." When another says, "I am a sound, orthodox Presbyterian," stick to this  
solid ground: "Christ has died." And if still another says, "I am a red-hot Methodist," answer  
him in the same way: "Christ has died." Whatever may be the confidences of others, and  
whatever may be your own, put them all away, and keep to this one declaration: "It is Christ  
that died." C H Spurgeon.*

Do you understand what Spurgeon said? If you question your standing before the Throne of Justice, stand on the substitutionary death of Christ. Don't plead your baptism! Don't plead your change of character. Don't plead a charismatic experience! Don't plead "Jesus in your heart!" Plead on and stand on the substitutionary work of Christ at Calvary. If Christ was condemned by God to die for you, how much condemnation is left for you to endure? ". . . may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," declared Paul (Galatians 6:14).

Additionally, Paul guarantees our justification at the cross because Christ is raised from the dead: "*It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again*" The resurrection was the guarantee that God accepted the substitutionary transaction at Calvary; that Christ was punished for our sins; but, that He was personally innocent. Therefore, God raised His innocent Son from the dead to prove to the world that personal righteousness of His Son and the efficacy of His propitiation.

Further, Paul adds another assurance: "*who is even at the right hand of God.*" The mention of His position at the right hand of the Father informs us of Christ's superior status and position in the universe. He is our Representative, and our Representative has access to the Supreme Judge of all men. Not only this, but He is God's Representative and means of salvation. His position at the right hand of God stresses the efficacy of His Representation. He is not one among many. He is the one person Whom the Father



loves and respects; He is the best among men! And, our Representative possesses a superior standing in the presence of the Father than any other.

More further, He is not only at the right hand of the Father, He actively intercedes for us: "*He maketh intercession for us.*" The verb "**maketh intercession**" (entugchano) is present tense meaning that He constantly advocates for us. Vincent on his notes on Hebrews 7:25 sees Christ intercession more of an intervention rather than intercession. But, both are true. Not only does His life guarantee us "eternal life" by standing between us and death, but He is in some way bringing petitions to the Father on our behalf. Whatever forms of communication exist between the Father and the Son, His intercession appears to be more than just His presence in heaven.

**Fifth, it is impossible for a believer to be separated from God.** "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*" Have you ever screamed, "God where are You?" There's not a serious Christian on earth who has not felt abandoned or at least distant from His careful attention. Here is a blessing of the gospel stronger than our feelings.

The word "*separate*" (chorizo) means to divide or to put space between. It is translated "leave" or "left" seven times in the NT. When Paul left Athens, he separated himself from the city (Acts 18:1). The ideal marriage, according to Jesus, is not to be separated (chorizo) by man (Matthew 19:6). The question before Paul's readers is "Who or what shall separate us from the love of Christ?" A search is made and seven possibilities appear:

Understand the nature of the question. What power, circumstance, or predicament is going to halt the completion of God's love program for our lives? Can you think of one thing? He has just asserted the judicial and legal permanence of God's verdict, and now he tests that assertion against all adverse circumstances that penetrate the life of a Christian. Paul now lists possibilities that might enter our minds.

### **CIRCUMSTANCES THAT CAN'T SEPARATE US FROM GOD**

*Shall tribulation?* The Greek word for tribulation is "*thilipsis*" It is used 35 times as a verb depicting the troubles believers experience for the gospel. The word "tribulation" (thlipsis) means to crush, or press together, or squash, or hem in, or compress, or squeeze. It refers to pressing troubles boxing a man in with no way of escape. In ancient England, those who refused to plead guilty to the king's charge had heavy weights placed on their chest until they were crushed to death. This kind of pressure can cause a Christian man to doubt God's love toward him. It would be easy to interpret man's rejection of the Christian message as God's animosity toward us. But, this is "stinkin' thinkin'."

*Shall distress?* The term distress, "stenochoria," is translated *anguish* in Romans 2:9. The word "stenochoria" refers to narrow places such as being caught in a military maneuver with no way of escape. It refers to an irretrievable loss, to an impossible, irreversible circumstance, to being squeezed by life's difficulties. It is the opposite of being in an open field. It is the feeling that the walls are closing in on you. But, hard places do not separate us from the love of God.

*Or persecution?* The word persecution, "*diogmos*," means "to make run." It is used ten times in the NT. The hate and animosity of men toward Christ is no indicator of God's disapproval. Many a good Christian in seeking to serve the Lord has lost his wealth and health in the service of Christ. But, this does not separate a man from Christ.

*Or famine?* This word “famine” needs no explanation as it refers to being homeless and moneyless. It involves hunger and thirst—a feeling of utter abandonment and terror. One would think that the Lord's people would be well fed, but not always. Being hungry can only happen to the extremely isolated or to the extreme poor. We must not interpret hunger as a sign of rejection by the Lord. Many of God's people have been through famines. Take the pilgrims, for example and the rationing of three beans a day. They hungered; but, the trusted Christ.

*Or nakedness?* Being naked (gumnotes) suggest insufficient clothing for the climate. It would involve being without money or credit, friends or neighbors. This is utter destitution. Many a good Christian man has been dressed in rags. God's people may not be the best dressed people in the world, but they are the most loved people on earth. A lack of shelter is not a sign that God has forsaken us.

*Or peril?* This term is used eight times Scripture. It refers to some type of jeopardy, a hazard. There is always the danger of losing one's job, or spouse, or friends, or money, or health in one's service to Christ. There are casualties of war. When circumstances are treacherous and there are no good choices, we may be tempted to look into heaven and ask, "Does God love me?" The answer is always “yes!”

*Psalm 44:22 As it is written, for they sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.*

*Or sword?* Shall the sword separate us from the love of Christ? Paul is probably referring to the executioner's sword like we read about when King Henry VII order the beheadings of some of his wives. And, this was the manner of Paul's departure from heaven to earth. Paul was persecuted from city to city, captured, tried, beaten, jailed, and flogged. Likewise, if you are not on some government's hate list, you aren't following Christ very closely.

Having listed sevenfold adversaries that conjure up the most terrifying fears, adversities which are instruments of Satan to crush all hope in our lives, Paul assures us that none of these trials can divide us from the love of Christ.

Here then is a description of the people of God: afflicted, rejected, hunted, targeted, and helpless like sheep. If rebellious men rejected the Shepherd, they will reject His sheep. If they hated him, they will hate us. From Nero to the Stalin, from the burning stake of the Pope to the gladiator games of the Romans, God's people are stalked and attacked. Even at this present hour many of God's people are jailed and sentenced to die.

*We are counted as sheep for the slaughter!* It's like God is telling us that Christians are meant to be killed, and made to be victims of treacherous men. Difficulties are not necessarily obstacles for God's children, but His appointed will for them. What? My financial difficulties, relational conflicts, job challenges, church battles, and health crisis is His will? Paul's quotation from Psalm 44:22 reminds believers that suffering has always been the lot of godly men, and therefore their own trials are not unique. Whereas the people of God are often perplexed about the reason for their trials, the studied Christian can trace his sufferings back to his decision to follow Christ. He can rejoice that he is counted worthy to suffer for His name.

But, none of these things can divide us from His love. Furthermore, none of these adverse circumstances can be admitted as evidence into the Court that God has forsaken us. In these distressing life calamities,

we may “feel” forsaken, but our feelings are liars and not to be heard. God’s promises are greater than our circumstances.

Moreover, the text ought to encourage the afflicted believer who may find himself in the most undesirable circumstance. He is not alone. He is not the first child of God to feel the pains and perils of crushing defeats. Many of God’s finest have felt the bray of pain and suffering: Jacob, Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Micah, John the Baptist, Jesus, and all the apostles. Everyone in the Hall of Fame knows what it is like to be abandoned and to face walls of enemies rushing toward him. When Satan whispers, “See, God doesn’t love you,” it’s a lie. Nothing in this life can separate us from the love of Christ. Nothing! Separation from the love of God? It’s just not possible!

### **FIVE AFFIRMATIONS**

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." This verse is a felicitous interjection. **Note five affirmations found in this verse.**

- We are more than “*conquers!*” We are called victors. There are no losers on God's team. There is no circumstance, no trouble, and no difficulty that can defeat us.
- The term “*more*” may refer to the fact that Christ has entered the battle for us and on our behalf and we now enjoy the victory of a war in which we did not fight.
- The phrase “*in all these things*” refers to nasty, negative circumstances Christians often find themselves. Victory is not always determined by the half-time score. There is no circumstance, no difficulty, for which there is not help.
- The phrase “*through Him*” informs us that there is always a way out through Christ. That deliverance comes through a person, and that person loves us. Notice the past tense. The Son is God’s door of escape for the believer.
- The phrase “*that loved us*” is stated as an undisputed fact. It refers to a settled conviction in the soul.

### **THINGS THAT CAN'T SEPARATE US FROM GOD'S LOVE**

**Death:** The German philosopher, Martin Heidegger said, "As soon as a man begins to live he is old enough to die." Even those who know Christ feel the cold chill of death. It is one thing to be rejected by men, it is another to be rejected by our own body. The megaphone of pain can wrongly be interpreted as God's rejection of us. The Christian knows that he has an appointment with death and that death will not separate him from the love of Christ. Rather, death is only the gateway into the kingdom of God. The last words of James Bairns were, "I've been dying for 20 years. Now I'm getting ready to live." Others have triumphantly stated, “I am getting ready to graduate,” and “I’m looking forward to my promotion.”

**Nor life:** Sometimes life is more threatening than death. Paying bills, dealing with relational conflicts and limited resources shake our confidence. Debt, illness, pain, or lose of a loved one is traumatic. Fears cannot succeed in dividing us from the love of God. But no matter how dark the future may seem to be, we must resist the temptation to see circumstances as a sign of God's rejection.

**Nor angels:** There may be unseen spirits at work against the Christian, but we are assured they have no power to break the cord tying us to His love.

***Nor principalities:*** Whether good or bad, active or inactive, many or few, legitimate authority or illegitimate authority, natural or super-natural, none of these powers, states, governments, or rulers can separate us from Him.

***Nor powers:*** The word here means "*energies*." It is the word "*dynamis*." It refers to those visible and invisible forces that seem to be against us. No matter how hideous or insidious, demonic or atomic, foul or fare, these forces will not be able to divide us from God's love.

***Nor things present:*** Sometimes present circumstances are so debilitating and demoralizing, but these are not situations that divide us from Him.

***Nor things to come:*** Sometimes we here reports comin' down the pike sort of speak that arouse fears. Oh, the fears we have about what could happen! Obstacles, lack of money, separation from loved ones, and the possibility of dying can suck faith right out of hearts. But, God is greater than the future. Even fears realized are not signs that we are forsaken.

***Nor height, nor depth:*** Here we have the dimensions of space. It matters little if they are linear or vertical; bi-dimensional or tri-dimensional; whether they are above our head or below our feet, none of these shall divide us from Christ.

***Nor any other creature:*** Now in case we did not get the point, Paul throws in the last catch-all phrase—"any other creature." Imagined or real, big or small, natural or spiritual, intelligent or beastly, good or bad -- -- none shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ.

There is nothing that can separate us from Christ, but there is one evil that can separate a man from the full enjoyment of His love and that is unbelief. Unbelief can rob us of the consolation of these verses and the realization that He will never leave us (Hebrews 13:5). Let us, therefore, do all we can to understand the height and depth and breadth of God's love for us at Calvary. Maybe this is why Paul prayed for enlightenment (Ephesians 3:10ff).

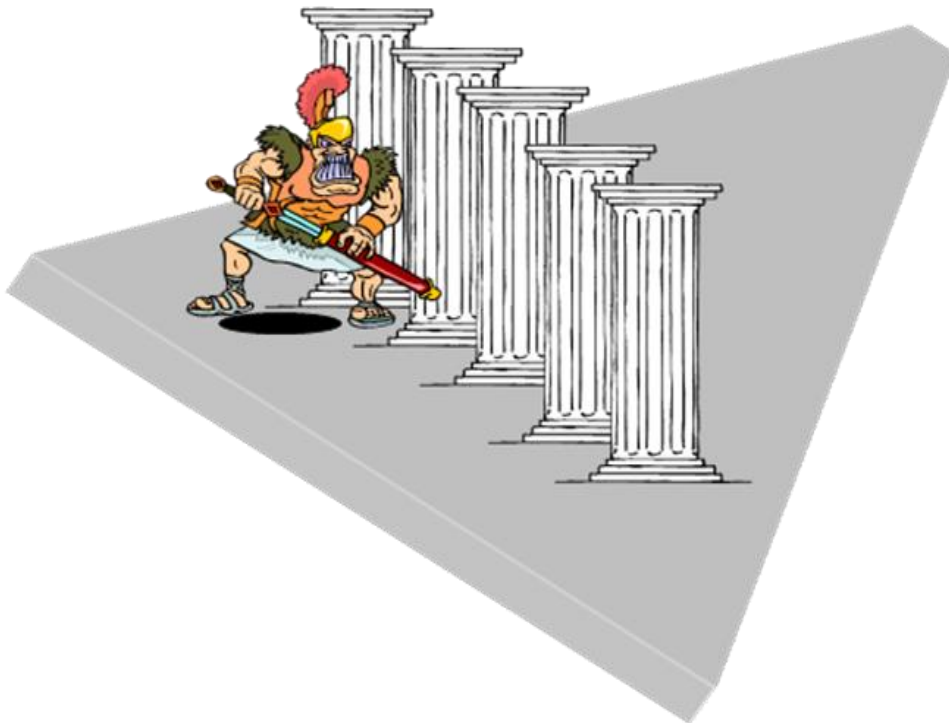
*Psalm 30:5 Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.(*

*Psalm 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.*

*Psalm 37:24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.*

*Romans 8:30 Those He justified, He also glorified.*

## **PILLAR FIVE: THE RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL**



## 72. THE CALL TO WORSHIP

***John 4:23-24 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.***

Jesus called men to worship the Father.

“*But the hour cometh, and now is*” refers to a new age where our Lord was training his disciples in the principles of true religion – the kingdom gospel; that is, He acknowledges He was involved in a new era of religion and that His disciples were a part of leaving the old and entering the new dispensation.

The woman at the well knew nothing of worship, of God, or of morality. She and the Samaritans worshiped a God they could not define. Yet she asked about which mountain, Samaria or Jerusalem, was the proper place to worship – a debate that went back a thousand years.

Jesus answered her by informing her that the Samaritans did not know who they worshipped and that the real issue in worship evolved around worshipping the true God in “spirit and truth.” Worship was **not** about one’s location<sup>69</sup>. Salvation was of the Jews: that is, the Jews were the stewards of the oracles of God. Life salvation, and the truth of God was in the Holy Scriptures which the Jews preserved. He is **not** saying the Jews of His day worshipped God correctly.

By “*spirit*” the Lord revealed that worship involved the union of the human spirit with the the Father Who is spirit. Moreover, spirit is contrasted with place, rituals, ceremonies, and routine liturgies that characterized worship in Samaria and Jerusalem. Rituals and ceremonies have a place in the worship as long as they do not distract one from the worship of the Father.

By “*truth*” the Lord does **not** mean *sincerity*. *Sincerity* is an aspect of true worship, but it is not the foundation of worship. The word “*truth*” is a *noun* and **not** an *adverb*. All worship of the Lord should be “sincere” but “sincerity” is **not** the basis of worship. Pagans may be sincere, but they are sincerely wrong.

By “*truth*” our Lord refers to an accurate view of the Father . . . one’s approach to the true God who does exist and not to some vague, distorted fiction. God has a being. He can be **defined** as ***the one, true, personal, infinite virtuous triune Spirit who created the heavens and the earth – the God of Israel, the Author of the Holy Scriptures, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

Jesus refers to God as the “*Father*” twice in verse 24: first as the *object of worship* and second as the *subject* doing the seeking of *true men*. The word “*such*” “*tous*” (definite article) refers to true worshippers and the article is in the emphatic position. He is not seeking “worship” as much as he is seeking true “*worshippers*.” Worship must be in conformity to the Divine will and rules set down for worshipping Him.

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<sup>69</sup> “Bloom where you are planted.”

The idea here is that there are creatures on this earth who want to know and adore the Author of their being. Jesus reveals that the Father is not an angry diety to be appeased; or a dreaded power to avoid, but love to be received (Ellicott).

*John 1:12 But as many as received him (Christ for Who He claimed to be), to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:*

## 73. THE CALL TO PLEASE GOD

***1 Thessalonians 4:1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.***

Throughout history, men have wrestled with how to please God. In an effort to satisfy their Maker, some have climbed up mountains on their knees; others have cut or mutilated themselves; many have walked on hot coals or glass; and some killed chickens or pigs. Jews sacrificed lambs and avoided pork. Baal worshippers castrated themselves. Myans sacrificed humans and ripped open their chest to cut out a living heart. Hindus stand on one foot or sleep on a bed of nails. Monks fasted. Luther beat himself with whips, put pebbles in his sandals, and wore a rope around his waist hoping his penance would satisfy His Judge;

**It is good news we know what pleases God.** The New Covenant has been finalized in Christ. The blessings of the Covenant are now offered to men. Will men accept the offer? Since men are called to the obedience of faith (Romans 1:5-6) into the fellowship of the Son (1 Corinthians 1:9), we know that God is pleased when men respond by faith.

It important to understand that the gospel is not only about the history of Christ and the benefits of His accomplishments, ***the gospel proclaims how to honor the Lord.*** Every command in the NT tells us what gladdens the heart of the Father.

*1 Timothy 1:8-11. But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is **contrary to sound doctrine; According to the glorious gospel** of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.*

This verse associates human acts with the gospel; i.e. the gospel reveals to man what kind of behavior pleases God and what kind of behaviors are contrary to the Christian walk. Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to straighten out some problems in the Ephesian church. One of the troubles that existed in this city was Jewish zealousness toward the Levitical traditions and subsequent rabbinical rulings. Paul warned Timothy about Jews in the city who attempted to lure Gentiles into the trappings of Judaism—especially rabbinical traditions. To Paul, the gospel was not opposed to law. There was a correct use of the Torah. While it is wrong to legalize salvation and to perpetuate works-based righteousness for salvation, it is also wrong to sequester the Torah and place it in a retirement home for aged ideologies. When used correctly,

the Ten Commandments and case law educate men about what is right. It also denounces deviant behavior condemned in the gospel. The gospel presents not only the glorious history of Christ, but the gospel reinforces the moral principles contained in the Torah. It represents the most glorious ethical standards ever articulated to man. ***It is good news that we know what pleases God and that we know how to respond to His revelation in history.***

How should one respond to the message of Christ? How does one enter into the life he promised and the kingdom He represented? One only has to open up an account in the Bank of Heaven to obtain its benefits. But, to understand it, we must look at both sides of the coin God wants us to deposit with Him (Acts 20:21):

**God requires repentance;** that is, men must face the rule of God and confront the sins in their life, the very things that made it necessary for Christ to die. Sin is the opposite of obedience to God's commands. Sin is rooted in personal autonomy, pride, and self-rule. Sin is going one's own independent way from God; adopting one's own personal gestalt in rebellion against God's law-order. Consequently, in the gospel God calls all men everywhere to repent. Repentance involves a decision to turn ones back on a life of sin, to bow the knee to Christ as Lord, and to accept the yoke of His rule in one's life (Isaiah 53:6).

**God requires faith;** that is, to investigate the claims of the historical Christ and to exercise faith in the risen Lord and Savior. The gospel calls men to look outside of themselves and trust Christ for salvation. Faith involves a deposit of confidence in the Christ of history. True faith believes that Christ literally died as man's substitute and that He literally, tangibly, physically rose again from the grave for his justification (Romans 4:25).

While the call to repentance is a call to confront one's own sinful behavior, faith is a call to investigate the facts of Christ's history; namely, His death, burial, and resurrection. It is important to understand that repentance and faith are not two steps to salvation, but two different sides of the same coin. One cannot deal with one without dealing with the other. Note what is required in Romans 10:9.

*"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus (forsake sinful self-rule and accept His authority and His government in one's life), and shalt believe in thine heart (affirm and confess the facts as true) that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"*  
(emphasis mine.)

Paul says that salvation is wrapped up in (a) confessing Christ as Lord; i.e. surrendering to the rule of God in one's life, and (b) examining the evidence of the historical Christ; i.e. his death, burial, and resurrection and depositing trust in his victory over death.

## **74. THE CALL TO REPENT**

***Acts 26:20 But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.***

### **INTRODUCTION**



***Paul laid God's expectations on men: "that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."***

Our Lord said that *"unless you repent you will likewise perish"* (Luke 13:5). Repentance is the negative side of faith. Repentance is the attitude and will that confronts sin within self; while faith is the positive side of hope that embraces Christ and His redemptive history. Salvation involves both repentance and faith.

### **THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE**

- The testimony of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2)
- The testimony of Jesus (Luke 13:5; Revelation 2:5, 16)
- The testimony of Peter (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:20)
- The testimony of Jewish Brethren (Acts 11:18)
- The testimony of Paul (Acts 17:30; 2 Corinthians 7:10)
- The testimony of Solomo(Proverbs 28:13)
- The testimony of Isaiah (Isaiah 55:7)

### **INCOMPLETE REPENTANCE**

- Repentance is **not** just tearful regret. Esau cried, but he did not repent (Hebrews 12:17).
- Repentance is **not** mere conviction under the preaching of God's Word. Felix was convicted, but he did not repent (Acts 24).
- Repentance is **not** just humbling ourselves before God. Ahab humbled himself, but he did not repent (1 Kings 21:27)
- Repentance is more than doing works of restitution. Judas returned his bribe, but he did not repent (Matthew 27:3-5).

### **DEFINITION OF REPENTANCE**

In Genesis 6:6, God repented. The *Law of First Mention* can help us understand the meaning of repent. The text says, *"God repented that He made man on the earth."* The Hebrew word for *"repented"* is *nacham* (~x;n"). It refers to the emotional grief that God felt in His own heart as He saw sin corrupting mankind in the pre-diluvian world. At that time, God determined to intervene and destroy the evil that was causing His grief. But, it was more than emotional grief. Grief emerged because God's character was violated. Grief is closely associated with character. Further, grief generated decision, and decision produced action.

**Grief**                      **→**                      **Decision**                      **→**                      **Action**

Further, it is important to understand that the word *"repent"* is a verb. In this case, the verb is a Niphal (passive); that is, grief/ pain occurred within God because of the sins of pre-diluvian man. Because of the

grief churning within Him, God changed His policy toward mankind in regards to His governmental dealings with that generation.

In regards to man's repentance, we can see that repentance involves **grief-decision-action**. When a man repents, it means that he is stricken with grief and makes a mental decision to change his course; i.e. to take action to reverse his sinning; to adopt within himself a new gestalt, a new stance, a new position, a new principle of government. Repentance fires one boss and appoints Christ as his Manager. In other words, he turns from sin and surrenders to the rule of God in his life.

This is consistent with the beatitudes, "Blessed are the pour in spirit," and "Blessed are those who weep now."

We can see this **grief-decision-action** view of repentance in the lexical data:

- *Metanolomai*: "a change of heart" (Matthew 21:29-32; Hebrews 7:21).
- *Metaneo*: "a change of mind" (Matthew 3:2; Mark 1:15).
- *Metanoia*: "a change of course" (Matthew 3:8; 9:13; Acts 20:21).

### **THE REPENTANCE OF JUDAH (Genesis 42-45)**

Perhaps, the most touching story of repentance is found in the life of Judah, the fourth son of Jacob.

Judah, along with his other brothers, became jealous of Joseph and agreed to sell Joseph, his irritating little brother, into slavery. However, Judah never dreamed of the pain this would cause his father Jacob. Jacob was inconsolable. As the days and months and years passed, Judah saw the wrinkles of grief burrowing into his father's brow. The sorrows of Jacob over the loss of Joseph pierced Judah's heart as well. As the years rolled by, Judah must have wondered what happened to his little brother. Little did he know that Joseph would be exalted to Prime Minister of Egypt.

When the famine slammed the Levant, and the Sun sucked the moisture out of grass, Judah's family was forced to buy grain in Egypt. When the brothers arrived, Joseph immediately recognized them and conceived a plan to test his brothers' repentance and to save his family from the famine by bringing them into the land of Egypt. During one of the tests that Joseph laid upon his brothers, he ordered his servants to put a silver cup in the grain sack of Benjamin, his younger brother. When arrested, Benjamin was accused of theft and taken as surety in exchange for his brothers' return to Egypt. Judah, however, objected, and begged the Prime Minister to take him as a permanent slave in exchange for Benjamin's freedom. Judah's magnanimous offer so stunned Joseph, that Joseph wept. It was time! Joseph reveal himself to the family as their long, lost younger brother. It was an amazing scene filled with joy and wonderment while at the same time tangled with guilt and grief.

Judah's change from a jealous beligerent in his brother's exile to a champion willing to lay down his life to restore Benjamin to his father Jacob is truly one of the most dynamic transformations in all of Scripture.

Note the **grief-decision-action** phenomenon at work in Judah.

Out of all his brothers, Judah grieved the most over the pain he brought into the life of his father by selling his brother and willfully deceiving his father. As he peered into the wrinkled, grief-stricken eyes of

his father, he felt the pain. Somewhere in this process, Judah must have made a decision that he would never, ever be the instrument to bring sorrow into his father's life again. When Joseph demanded Benjamin's incarceration, Judah's grief-decision burst into action by throwing himself at Joseph's feet begging him to accept his voluntary enslavement in exchange for the freedom of Benjamin. Judah truly repented. Consequently, when Jacob was on his deathbed, he bequeathed the messianic blessing to Judah, his beautiful, repentant son who so much like the Savior Who sought to spare his Father grief by offering to go to the cross and pay for the sins of humanity.

### **REPENTANCE AS LEVITICAL LAW**

When God gifted the nation with His law, He laid down *the principle of restitution—a form of repentance*. If a man stole an animal, he was to return the animal and to make restitution up to 400% of the value of the stolen animal (Exodus 22:1). If the animal was found alive, the man had to pay double (22:4). *Real repentance meant real restitution*.

The principle of restitution can be seen in Leviticus 6. In relationship to sin, a repentant person was (a) to restore the stolen goods (6:4). The word “*restore*” (bWv, shub) means “to return;” (b) to make full restitution (6:5). The word “*restitution*” comes from the Hebrew word “~lev” (*shalem*) which means “*to make whole, or to make sound*.” The thief had to pay compensatory damages; and (c) to pay punitive damages (6:6); that is, to add 20% to the value of what was stolen as part of his repentance in order to make the man whole.

After applying remedy to his victim, the penitent was to bring his guilt offering to the Lord as an atonement for his sin.

What is necessary to understand in this passage is **that restitution was first**, and that atonement for sin was **second!** God informed the Hebrews that a man could not seek His forgiveness **until** he first made restitution for damaged or stolen property; that is, provide proof of claim. This same concept is found in Matthew 5:23ff where the worshipper is exhorted to first get right with his neighbor before he attempts to get right with God. In the story of Zaccheus, Jesus said, “*Salvation has come to this house*,” but only after Zaccheus said, “*Today, I give half of my possessions to the poor*.” That is, Zaccheus first repented and made his victims whole; then, Christ pronounced him clean (Luke 19).

Modern feckless, psychologized man sees repentance as being “sorry” for what one has done instead of making his victim whole. And, to make matters worse, victims are pressured into “forgiving” the transgressor before the transgressor has exercised his duty to provide remedy to the victim.

### **REPENTANCE IN PSALM 51**

In this psalm, we see that repentance involved confession and prayer. Note the characteristics of repentance found in David's admirable confession:

- A felon-like sense of guilt and a desperate desire to be cleansed. Note David's cry, “*blot out . . . wash me . . . cleanse me . . . purge me . . .*” (Psalm 51).
- A soldier-like reception of condemnation (51:3).
- An accountant-like tabulation of sins (51:3,4).

- A fan-like confession that God is right (51:4).
- A defector-like departure from the course of sin (51:4ff).
- An epoxy-like commitment to do that which will please God (13,16, 10-12).
- A parasite-like dependence on Divine power (51:14).

### **REPENTANCE IN ISAIAH 1:16**

***Isaiah 1:16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.***

In this passage, God declared that he would not hear the prayers of His sinning people (1:15). If people wanted God to hear them, they had to put away evil. God called the nation to repent. Repentance involves actions: washing, cleansing, putting away evil, ceasing from evil, learning to do well, seeking judgment; relieving the oppressed, helping the fatherless, and pleading for the widow. It is a contract, and the repentant consents.

### **REPENTANCE AND HOSEA**

***Hosea 14 God called the nation back to Himself. He gave way for the backslidden to return to Him through steps of repentance.***

- Repentance involves a change of direction: “*Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God.*” (14:1).
- Repentance involves confession: “*Take with you words and return to the Lord*” (14:2).
- Repentance involves forsaking sins and idols: “*Assyria will not save us*” (14:3).

This kind of repentance results in restored fellowship: “*I will heal . . . I will love . . . I will be like the dew . . . and they will blossom*” (14:4-7). It was a contract, and the repentant consents.

### **REPENTANCE AND JOHN THE BAPTIST (Matthew 3)**

John the Baptist came preaching repentance to the nation of Israel (Matthew 3:2). He proclaimed the arrival of the kingdom of God; i.e. the rule and authority of God operating in and through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. To prepare for the kingdom of God, people needed to repent.

- Repentance is compared to highway workers going before a king’s chariot removing rocks and filling up potholes: “*Make ready the way of the Lord*” (3:3).
- Repentance entails a public commitment to return to God: “*and they were baptized*” (3:6)
- Repentance entails confession of sins: “*as they confessed their sins*” (3:6).
- Repentance entails action: “*Bear fruit in keeping with repentance*” (3:8).
- Repentance entails forsaking false hopes: “*Do not say . . .*” (3:9).

- Repentance entails judgment of sins: “*The ax is already laid at the root . . .*” (3:10).
- Repentance entails surrender to the authority of Christ: “*He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor*” (2:11-12).

In Luke 3, repentance entailed giving away garments (3:11), a proper application of tax law (3:13), to reject bribes, to tell the truth and not slander innocent men, and contentment with wages (3:14).

### **REPENTANCE AND JESUS**

Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God and demanded that men repent. If a sinner wants to enter the kingdom of God, he must reject self-rule and surrender to the rule of God in Christ. Repentance is primarily a response to the authority of Christ the King (Matthew 4:17).

***Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray, we have everyone turned to his own way.***

“*My wayism*” is the human problem. The cure is in turning from self-rule and surrendering to His government (Lordship) . . . to his salvation at the cross.

### **REPENTANCE AND THE APOSTLE PAUL**

In Acts 20:21, Paul proclaimed the gospel and demanded two responses from men: (a) repentance toward God; i.e. a turning from sin and returning to God; and (b) faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; i.e. embracing Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection as one’s only hope for eternal salvation.

In Romans 10:9, Paul proclaimed the gospel and demanded the two same responses from men: (a) confession of the Lordship of Jesus Christ; i.e. forsaking sin and surrender to his authority; (b) faith in Jesus’ historical conquest over death; i.e. embracing the Christ event as a true, fact of history.

In Acts 26:20, the emphasis is on repentance and DOING WORKS consistent with repentance.

### **THE FRUITS OF REPENTANCE**

- A holy contempt for the root of sin as well as the fruit of sin (Ezekiel 14:6; Psalm 119:114).
- A confession of sin (1 John 1:9ff)
- A confession that God is right (1 Samuel 12:7)
- A godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10).
- A change of course (Matthew 3:8)
- Restitution where possible (Leviticus 5, 6)
- A change in behavior (Isaiah 1:16)

First and foremost, repentance involves grief for one’s sin and the pain it causes. Second, it involves a mental decision to forsake self-determination and to accept the authority of Christ in one’s life. Third, repentance must be put into action to forsake the sins of commission (cessation of unlawful acts) and to initiate action where there have been sins of omission (the initiation of lawful requirements).

Two errors must be avoided: First, some clergy teach that repentance is not necessary for salvation. Many in the grace movement teach that if one preaches repentance, they are preaching works; that faith is all that is necessary for salvation; that to ask any man to judge sins in his life is somehow a works-based program. To separate repentance from faith, and Lordship from a confession of faith is simply not Biblical — It is a perversion of grace. Secondly, some do turn repentance into a works-based program demanding forms penance. Catholic orders are famous for confusing repentance and penance. Holding two concepts in juxtaposition to each other without contradiction or synthesis is the mark of maturity. If Paul managed to preach repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ without contradiction and without synthesis, so must we.

*Acts 20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, **repentance** toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

## 75. THE CALL TO FAITH

*John 20:31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

The most spoken condition to be fulfilled to obtain salvation is that of faith. Trust seizes Christ, Trust is the positive side of faith. Repentance is the negative side of faith in that the while the person is laying hold of Christ, he rejects personal autonomy. Faith embraces the truth of the gospel while simultaneously releasing its grip on sin (repentance).

*Faith*, however, is **not** a virtue. It is **not** character trait that makes God the Responder. *Faith is a gift of God* that sees what He has done through the Son to bring salvation to men.

### LINGUISTIC DATA

The word “*believe*” is the Greek word *pisteuo* (pisteu,w). Strong’s lists the word as being translated in the following ways:

- believe (239)
- commit unto (4)
- commit to (one's) trust (1)
- be committed unto (1)
- be put in trust with (1)
- be commit to one's trust (1)
- believer (1) (248)

### FAITH IN HEBREWS 11:1

What is the meaning of faith?

***Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.***

The word “*substance*” is the Greek word *hupostasis*. The word *hupostasis* has been a difficult word to translate because the term was lost in history. It is usually translated “foundation.”

It wasn't until Sir William Ramsay, the archaeologist, discovered an account in Egypt that contained the Greek word *hupostasis* that light was shed on its meaning. Apparently, a certain woman named Dionysia lost a law suit in a lower court in the days of the Ptolemaic reign and decided to appeal her case to a higher court. She put her records in a stone encasement and sent them to the higher court by way of her slave. The slave stopped for the night in a common lodge and was later assaulted by a band of raiders. The slave lost his life and the stone encasement was buried in the sands of time -- until Ramsay unearthed it.

The papyri in the stone encasement reads: “In order that My Lord the Praefect may know that my claim to this property is just, I enclose my *hupostasis*.” The *hupostasis* consisted of title deeds to property.

Now we can properly translate Hebrews 11:1: “*Faith is the **title deed** to things hoped for.*” If a person has faith, he has the title deed to Heaven's property.

The word “*evidence*” is the Greek word *elegchos*. It is translated “reproof” (once) and “evidence” (once). It means: (a) a proof, that by which a thing is proved or tested, or (b) a conviction. In this section, faith appears as a *title deed* or evidence that one holds title deed to the land. It is the quiet confidence that the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is a fact of history and that the Christ event provides for one's salvation.

The Irish have a word for *believe*. It is called “*lippen*.” It means to “hold weight.” An Irishman once asked a traveler crossing a catwalk over a large stream, “Will the bridge *lippen* your weight?” The question pondered the integrity of the bridge. Could one exercise full confidence in the bridge? Biblical faith puts one's full weight on Christ as the bridge to God. He is the way, the truth, and the life—the only bridge to the Father (John 14:6).

***Believe*** (*pisteuo*) is a Greek present tense informing us of the fact that true faith is durative. Biblical faith is a resident conviction, not a one-time prayer or a spurious moment of decision. ***It is an error to think that faith for a moment brings life for eternity.*** Biblical faith is a studied position—the assurance that arises when a juror investigates the facts of a case.

## **FAITH AND THE OLD TESTAMENT**

In commenting on the Hebrew words for “*believe*” Berkoff has this to say (p. 493): “The Hebrew word for believe is *he'emin* (!m;a', 'aman). It means “to believe.” In Qal, it means “to nurse” or “to nourish.” In the Niphal it means “to be firm” or “established or be steadfast.” In the Hiphal it means “to consider established” or “to regard as true.””

The word “*believe*” (*aman*) is translated “*they will not support me . . .*” in Exodus 4:1. This is akin to the Irish meaning of “*lippen*.”

The Hebrew word *batach* means “to confide” or “to lean on” or “to trust” (2 Kings 18:22):

*“Now, behold, thou **trustest** (xj;B', batach) upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man **lean** (xj;B', batach), it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that **trust** (xj;B', batach) on him.”*

The Hebrew word *chasah* means “to hide one’s self” or “to flee for refuge” in 2 Samuel 22:31:

*“As for God, His way is blameless; the word of the LORD is tested; He is a shield to all who take **refuge** (hs;x', chachah) in Him.”* Thus, we can conclude the OT meaning of the word “trust” means “to lean on,” or “to rely on” or “to take refuge in” the work of Christ (Berkoff, 1993).

### **A THEOLOGICAL DEFINITION**

- “By faith, we mean the sum total of Christian doctrine” (Thiessen, 1979, (p. 271). In this sense, it is not an action; it is a noun, **the content** of the Christian faith.
- “Faith is the turning of the soul to God, as repentance is the turning of the soul from sin.” (Thiessen, 1979, p. 270).
- Albert Gray, former president of Pacific Bible College, says faith is intellectually necessary, that it is emotional (Romans 10:10), that it is volitional (Romans 10:16) (Gray, 2005, p. 272).
- Hodge makes a distinction between dead faith, temporary faith, and saving faith (Hodge, 1992, p. 442).
- Faith is “an intellectual conviction, resting on the testimony of another,” (Berkoff, 1993, p. 494).

Faith is a decision. Like a juror who looks at the evidence presented in court and comes to a verdict, so faith is a decision of trust after a preponderance of the evidence concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

### **PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT FAITH**

**Analytical faith:** Analytical faith is something that is true in theory, but may not be true in practice. For example the term parallel is defined as “extending in the same direction and at the same distance apart at every point, so as never to meet, as lines, planes, etc.” But, in practice such as constructing highways, two roads are never exactly the same distance apart. But, for the purpose of driving, its parallel construction is close enough. God does not call us to exercise analytical faith. Anyone can develop a theory about God or heaven or life after death. All religions have a theory about God. Even atheists have theories about what happens after death.

**Synthetic faith:** Synthetic faith is a conclusion one reaches after examining the evidence of a faith-claim. This is something one believes or disbelieves based on evidence. It is never one hundred percent sure because nothing in this world is beyond reasonable doubt. God calls us to exercise synthetic faith; i.e. to examine the evidence of Christ and His resurrection and to make a decision **based on the evidence discovered**.

Luke offered his testimony to the world regarding the Christ event he referred to “*many infallible proofs*” (Acts 1:3). **Christianity is all about proof of claim**. It challenges men to put on the lawyer hat and examine the evidence regarding His death, burial, and resurrection. *Don’t follow feelings; follow the facts.*



Pull out your little book on the Rules of Evidence; and, made a decision based on the historical, forensic evidence available; that is, read the gospels and make a decision about the plausibility of NT witnesses. Cross-examine the eye-witness testimony of those who claimed to see a living Christ after he was dead and buried.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH**

Prominent Swedish Christian, Jonas Gardell, expresses what so many people think. He says people are not saved by the death of Christ, but by faith. But, he could not be more wrong (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1E51wobpfh4>).

- Biblical faith is **not** just raw energy. It has an object: Christ, the grace of God, Calvary, and the love of God.
- Faith is **not** faith in faith. Faith is not a virtue or a personal attribute. It is **not** a character trait. It is **not** the same as a positive outlook on life. It is **not** a bright, happy, confident attitude. Faith is **not** a personal, religious experience. It is **not** being religiously subjective. It is **not** introspection or “getting in touch” with your feelings. Faith is **not** having “Jesus in your heart.” It is **not** the same thing as love or having love bloom into a garden of good deeds. It is more than mental assent to a statement or fact. Faith is a view, a direction of hope with an object, a focus on the Son on the cross, an eye of trust in the atonement of Christ (John 3:14).
- It does **not** look at the human heart. Rather, it always looks up to God and what He has done in and through His Son. Faith never loses sight of God’s love and His work through Christ: “Christ Jesus is the one who died” (Romans 8:34).
- Biblical faith looks away from one’s own accomplishments to the accomplishments of Another. Faith involves a commitment to Christ as Lord and Savior after having cross-examined the evidence for His resurrection. God’s redemptive act in Christ is a final and irreversible act of divine grace. It is a finished work whether man believes it or not. *Believe* is a present tense verb that implies durative action. Faith for a moment does not save a person for eternity. Where there is no present, living faith, there can be no present ordered justification. In Romans 5:1, the word *justifieth* is an aorist passive participle implying that justification does not come in stages. A person is “declared righteous” the moment a person believes.
- Saving faith must be distinguished from the faith of demons (intellectual ascent), which is spurious and temporal (emotional). Saving faith is rational and direct. It involves investigation into the historical claims of the gospel. It is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9)<sup>70</sup>.

In summary, faith is **not** a virtue<sup>71</sup> nor does it look inside self for assurance of salvation. Rather, faith looks outside of self to Another for deliverance from the penalty of sin. Faith is a view, the direction one

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<sup>70</sup> Because “faith” in this verse is in the feminine and “gift” is in the neuter, we conclude that “all of salvation is a gift including faith,” rather than just “faith” being a gift.

<sup>71</sup> In Catholic theology faith is sometimes viewed as a gift, a virtue placed within the heart of man that becomes a substitute for righteousness by law.

is looking for help. Like the victim of snake bite looked the brazen serpent in the wilderness for healing, biblical faith looks to Calvary for salvation (John 3:14-16).

### **THE CHARACTER OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH (Romans 4:17ff):**

- His faith did not believe in the general concept of a divine being, but in a particular deity, the God who could raise the dead. He believed the LORD God was able to raise Isaac even if slain. This is absolutely amazing seeing that the resurrection was not a fully developed doctrine as it is today.
- His faith cooperated with the God who “calls things that are not as though they were.” God calls men to believe before He takes action.
- His faith believed in hope; i.e. there was nothing in his being or his circumstances which could verify this kind of confidence.
- His faith was not weak; i.e. even though Abraham and Sarah were past child-bearing age, Abraham did not factor his age into the equation. The Scripture tells us that Abraham knew that Sarah's womb was dead (**ne,krwsij**, nekrosis) and that she was past the time of life to bare children.
- His faith did not stagger at the amazing promise of God; that is, he did not think that God's promise was impossible. He thought it was probable. The word “stagger” or “waiver” (**diekri,qh**) is an aorist passive meaning “to divide” or “separate” or “dispute.” Abraham was not divided in his own mind. He was fully committed to the promise mentally and emotionally.
- His faith was strong. Though Abraham's body aged, his faith grew stronger.
- His faith gave glory to God in advance of the fulfillment; that is, Abraham gave thanks and praise to God for the promise knowing that what God promised, He would perform.
- His faith was convinced; i.e. it was a settled conviction based on the evidence of God's character. One would do well to be convinced God could give life to a dead womb, but Abraham was “fully persuaded” (**plhroforhqeij**) that God was going to do what He promised.
- His faith was the means of imputed righteousness, that is, the Creator was pleased to impute to Abraham a righteous standing before God.

### **MATTHEW'S INVITATION TERMS**

Matthew presents salvation as an opportunity to enter the kingdom of God. He only uses the word “faith” twelve times; and “believe” eight times. Not once, however, does Matthew use the word *believe* as an invitation concept; that is, Matthew does not call men “to believe,” but to repent and submit. He called them to engage the rule of God. How, therefore, did Matthew call men to respond to the presence of the kingdom of God? How could men enter into it?

- Entrance into the kingdom demanded repentance:

*Matthew 3:2 Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

- Entrance into the KOG involved possession of righteousness greater than the Pharisees:

*Matthew 5:20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

- Entrance into the kingdom demanded a radical confrontation with sin:

*Matthew 5:29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

- Entrance into the kingdom demanded an unpopular decision; i.e. to take the road less traveled.

*Matthew 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.*

- Entrance into the kingdom demanded seeking the rule of God; i.e. to arrange one's self under the authority of kingdom rule, the King, and His law.

*Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

- Entrance into the kingdom involves an intense pursuit:

*Matthew 7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*

- Entrance into the kingdom demanded more than lip service:

*Matthew 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

- Entrance into the kingdom demanded a bold allegiance to Christ. Superficial friendship would not do:

*Matthew 10:32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*

- Entering the kingdom involved a total investment:

*Matthew 10:39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*

- Entering the kingdom may sever relationships:

*Matthew 10:37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

- Entering the kingdom involves an end of self-determination:

*Matthew 10:38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*

- Entering the kingdom demands a bold decision. The term “violence” refers to the unprecedented appearance of the kingdom and its power on earth in Christ, and the radical decision needed to lay hold of kingdom benefits.

*Matthew 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*

- Entering the kingdom demands surrender to the rule of Christ; i.e. one must acknowledge the Kingship of Christ and accept His yoke. Yoke would refer to coming under His authority and control.

*Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

- Entering the kingdom involves a total commitment. A person may have to change course, rearrange his priorities, or make a total investment in the gospel to enter into the kingdom.

*Matthew 13:46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*

- Entering the kingdom demands conversion of the proud:

*Matthew 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

**The Rich Young Ruler:** To Matthew, entrance into the kingdom of God demanded a bold, radical decision to surrender to kingdom authority. Since the kingdom of God was present in the life and ministry of Christ, entrance into the kingdom could only be obtained by radically responding to Christ and His demands. The Lord ordered the young business man to go sell all that he had, give to the poor, and to follow him. This was a radical demand! But, the rich young ruler would not let go of his idols and obey the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 19:21-23).

**Blind Bartimaeus:** An example of a positive radical decision can be found in the story of blind Bartimaeus (Matthew 20:30). Luke commented that “Jesus of Nazareth passeth by . . .” (Luke 18:37). The fact that Bartimaeus was blind and that Jesus was a healer of the blind and that Jesus was passing by provided this / these blind men with a once in a lifetime opportunity. Immediately, Bartimaeus shot out of his chair and started shouting: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Bartimaeus demanded an audience with Jesus. Though the crowd urged him to sit still and be quiet, Bartimaeus was not going to be ignored. When he gained Jesus’ attention, he begged for his miracle, and he / they received it. The lesson is obvious: Though it may cost all one has to possess salvation, it is worth it. Fundamentally, entrance into the kingdom makes **one demand: decision -- the decision to follow Christ!** It involved “repentance” towards sin (self-government) and “acceptance” of the rule of God over one’s soul (Ladd, 1959).

In summary, Matthew saw salvation in terms of kingdom authority. To enter the kingdom one must repent of self-determination, and surrender to the authority of King Jesus. He must seek kingdom rule and come under the yoke of Christ (Matthew 10:28-29).

### **JOHN’S INVITATION TERMS**

In juxtaposition to Matthew, John proclaimed the necessity of faith. While Matthew announced the arrival of Israel's King in history, John announced the world had received a divine visit from the Creator of heaven and earth. This planet was invaded by the presence of God. John wanted people to examine the evidence of Christ's deity and his victory over death by virtue of His resurrection. John, therefore, called for faith in the Person of Christ and used the following invitation terms:

- "receive" (John 1:12)
- "commit" (John 2:24)
- "believe" (John 6:29)
- "commeth" (John 6:35)
- "seeth" or ("look" John 6:40)
- "eat" and "drink" (John 6:54 )
- "hear" (John 5:25)

### **ENTERING THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

The kingdom of God, therefore, is an offer to men to receive Divine blessings: of deliverance from condemnation (John 5:24, deliverance from Satan, the forgiveness of sins (Acts 26:18), and the blessing of eternal life (John 3:3, 15). These spiritual riches are offered to all who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. We can have eternal life, experience forgiveness of our sins, and be delivered from the power of sin and Satan. The blessings of the age to come can be obtained now in advance of the kingdom's dramatic consummation at the end of history.

But how does one obtain those blessings? How does one enter the kingdom? The kingdom of God makes one fundamental demand: a faith decision.

*John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God. . .*

God offers the blessing of eternal life, but He demands one accept His Son for Who He claimed to be—the Word, the Life, the Lamb of God, the King of Israel, the one an only God. One does not have to earn eternal life, but one must decide to receive it.

But, what kind of decision saves? It depends on what kind of decision one makes.

**The decision must be determinate.** That is, it must not be spurious, superficial, or hypocritical. "*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matthew 11:28).

**The decision must be dynamic:** "*Take my yoke upon you . . .*" (Matthew 11:29). A "yoke" is a symbol of submission and control by Another. We must deal radically with our sin of independence, and we must yield to the authority of the risen Christ. He is Lord, and He must be received as such. Salvation involves giving Him the title deed to our lives; the keys to the closets of our lives; acceptance of His yoke, rule, and laws.

**The decision must dispossess the individual:** *"Take my yoke upon you . . . and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart . . ."* (Matthew 11:29; 19:16ff). A faith decision must cause the individual to break from his past and to enter boldly into a new future which involves following Christ. It may cost a person his lifestyle, his friends, and precious sins, but it is worth it. It may cost ambitions, money, or lovers to enter the kingdom. The blessings of the kingdom are a precious treasure and it is worth whatever sacrifice it may cost a person to enter it (Matthew 13:44).

**The decision must be definitive:** *"Ye shall find rest (eternal salvation) unto your souls"* (Matthew 11:29; 10:38). That is, your decision must be of eternal significance. A temporal, emotional, whimsical decision won't usher a man into the life of the kingdom. Your decision must gain the attention of heaven because it involves the possession of eternal life for our soul. Your decision must mark you as one who acts from faith. The concern isn't, "Do you know about Him?" but "Does He know you?" (John 10:27).

The message of the gospel is that the kingdom of God has entered history in advance of its judicial consummation, not to judge men for their sins, but to deliver them from evil and to offer to men who will acknowledge the rule of God in their lives the blessings of the age to come.

*(Romans 10:9). That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved*

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The following responses require life, that is, salvation. These are the responses that follow salvation—responses that beautify the Christian in his quest for sanctification. Repentance and faith bring salvation to the soul. But, once a person is a child of God, he has duties and responsibilities. The following responses are duties of the redeemed.

## **76. THE CALL TO BE BAPTIZED**

### **SEVEN BAPTISMS IN THE NT**

- John's baptism, the baptism of repentance (Matthew 3:2; Mark 1:4),
- the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-15),
- the baptism of Moses (1 Corinthians 10:2),
- the baptism of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 6:3ff; Ephesians 4:5),
- the baptism of the cross (Mark 10:38),
- the baptism of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:29), and
- Believer's baptism (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38-41, Acts 8:12; 10:47).

The baptism we are concerned with here is believer's baptism.

## **BELIEVER'S BAPTISM**

Baptism is response commanded by God. While it does not save men, it certainly does separate the sheep from goats. It is not necessary for justification, but it is necessary for sanctification. Baptism is not essential to obtain salvation, but those who have obtained salvation are baptized. It should be the first command one obeys after bowing the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Matthew 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

The word “go” is an aorist participle used in an imperative sense. It can be translated, “having gone” or “having initiate action to go into all the world.” The key verb is “teach” or “make disciples” (maqhteu,sate). Making disciples is the mission of the church. “*Make disciples*” is an aorist imperative implying action that needs to be initiated at once. “*Baptizing*” is a temporal participle concurrent with the main verb, “make disciples.” It should be translated, “make disciples while baptizing them.” “In the name” is a singular accusative. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are connected by “kai” the Greek conjunctive. This does not support trine baptism; that is, baptizing them in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Spirit. While there are three distinct personalities in the godhead, there is only one God and one name and one baptism.

Baptism was commanded by the Savior, obeyed by the apostles and practiced by the early church. Baptism is considered a church ordinance; that is, an authoritative decree or command. It is not an option for the one who has declared his allegiance to Christ. All believers should be baptized.

## **WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BELIEVER'S BAPTISM?**

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter proclaimed the gospel and challenged people to repent. Over 3000 souls were baptized. Baptizing believers has followed gospel proclamation since the birth of the church.

Water baptism is an **outward statement** about an **inward reality** – or a public statement about a change in citizenship – a public notice about a change in status. When a person receives Christ as his Savior, he identifies himself with the Lord. At that moment, the believer immediately inherits ALL THE BENEFITS of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. He is instantaneously "blessed with all spiritual blessings . . ." (Ephesians 1:3-4). As a symbol of his faith, he surrenders to water baptism. It does not symbolize the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection as much as it symbolizes the believer's union with His Lord. Baptism, therefore, becomes a **public declaration about personal identification—about the believer's union with Christ**. It is a *physical* testimony about a *spiritual* transformation. It is a symbolic statement about a concrete commitment. When a person is baptized, he proclaims his identification with Christ -- that he has entered into the blessings of salvation.

Believer's baptism, therefore, presupposes regeneration. That is, a person that has not experienced justification / regeneration has nothing to proclaim and therefore cannot be a candidate for baptism.

Baptism does **not** save souls or wash away sins! It does **not** bring one in contact with the blood. Going into water does **not** cleanse the conscience or purify the inner man. Baptism is **not** meritorious or conditional for salvation. It is the *doing and dying* of Christ on behalf of men that cleanses from sin (Hebrews 9:14; 1 John 1:7).

*Acts 16:30-31 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

### **WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED**

All who have repented of sin and trusted the risen Lord Jesus Christ as Savior should be baptized. This should be done willingly and gladly (Acts 2:41). Non-Christians should not be baptized because baptism is only for believers. Infants should not be baptized because they have not come to an age of responsibility nor have they accepted Christ as their Savior. Baptism is only for those who have placed their faith in Christ as their Savior.

*And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?*

And Philip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:36-37).

Many churches baptize babies. We see neither a command nor example in Scripture to merit the historic practice of infant baptism. John McArthur says the NT does not teach infant baptism; only believer's baptism. R.C. Sproul agrees . . . but goes to the OT to demonstrate how infant baptism performs like infant circumcision.

To our knowledge, neither Jesus nor His disciples baptized children. While the children of Christian parents are "holy" (1 Corinthians 7:14), "set apart" for a special work of grace, and may be dedicated to the Lord (1 Samuel 1:28), this certainly does not justify the doctrine of infant baptism. The primary requirement to be baptized is the possession of true faith (Acts 16:30-32). Infants do not have saving faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), though some are set apart for salvation.<sup>72</sup>

Infant baptism, although popular in several denominations, is a religious ceremony not found in the Bible. The clear and overwhelming evidence from the New Testament is that only believers were baptized, and that they were baptized by immersion. We simply do not need more baptized "unbelievers" in church. There is no such thing as "covenant children" in the NT. God only has one kind of child and that is true, born-again children. To speak of "covenant children" in the NT is an insertion of doctrine into Scripture that is not there. There is no example in Scripture of the apostles baptizing infants or unbelievers (Acts 2:38; 9:18; 19:5; Colossians 2:12, etc.).

R.C. Sproul would disagree with the above statement saying that infant baptism is a sign that one has a duty to believe and follow Christ just like circumcision was a sign of devotion to YHWH: He believed that baptism, as a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, should be extended to the infant children of believers, mirroring the practice of circumcision in the Old Testament. Sproul argued that the promises of

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<sup>72</sup> Generally speaking, covenant theology believes that infant baptism replaces circumcision as the sign of the new covenant (Colossians 2:11ff). This belief has a biblical basis. It is reasonable and logical. But, the lack of Biblical instruction on this subject is disconcerting; i.e., infant baptism is implicit, not explicit in Scripture. Dedicating a child to Christ is certainly Biblical and covenant baptism is a type of dedication. The pro of this practice is that it reminds the congregation and the parents that they have a duty to raise their child under the teachings of Christ. The danger of course, is that some may have false assurance of salvation. Historically speaking, many unregenerate men assert they are saved, not because of their conversion but because their parents baptized them as a child.



the covenant extend to believers and their children, and that excluding infants from baptism is a mistake; that Christian parents have the same duty to baptize infants as OT Israelites had to circumcise children – a reasonable argument.

Thus, the remainder of this teaching on baptism is from a believer's baptism point of view.

### **WHY SHOULD ONE BE BAPTIZED?**

Baptism is not for the purpose of gaining salvation, being blessed, receiving the Holy Spirit or becoming a church member. One submits to baptism because he is saved, blessed, has the Holy Spirit, and is a member of the body of Christ (Acts 16:31; Ephesians 1:13, 14; 1 Corinthians 12:12). Baptism is not a requirement for justification (Romans 4:5), but it is a requirement for sanctification (obedience and growth). If one loves the Lord, he will gladly obey Him. Love for Christ is the motive of baptism.

*John 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

### **WHEN SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?**

MacArthur: Mature Christians should teach new Christians about baptism immediately after conversion. One should be baptized after salvation, not before. In the New Testament, men and women were baptized within hours after their confession of faith (Acts 2:41; 8:12; 10:47). True faith is eager to obey the Lord Jesus. There is little merit to any kind of delay when it comes to obedience in the Christian life (Luke 6:46). Likewise, those inadvertently baptized as a baby or as a young child and who come to know the Lord later in life, should submit to Christian baptism. If you are saved and you understand the reasons for baptism, then you should request to be baptized.

### **HOW SHOULD ONE BE BAPTIZED?**

Christians are commanded to baptize new believers (Matthew 28:19-20). But the mode of baptism is not commanded. It is somewhat obscure in Scripture. Christians still differ as to whether sprinkling or immersion is appropriate. The Greek word "baptizo" means "to place into" or "to dip." A new believer is spiritually baptized or "placed into Christ" at his conversion by the Spirit and immediately inherits the benefits of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:2-4). The baptism of Romans 6 is a reference to the spiritual mystery of being identified with the history of Christ. This is a spiritual operation and does not refer to water baptism. Water baptism, on the other hand, is an accurate and adequate picture of the believer's identification with Christ. Going down into the water is a beautiful symbol of one's faith in death, burial, and resurrection of Christ -- that one's old relationship with sin is finished. Coming out of the water is a simple and clear statement that one has a new life in Christ that he co-shares in the resurrected life of our highly-exalted Savior.

Those Christians who practice sprinkling as the mode of baptism, usually those in the Covenant Camp, approach the subject somewhat differently. To these believers, baptism is a picture of one coming under the kingdom blessings of Christ, namely the blessings of the eschatological Spirit. Sprinkling, then, is a symbol that one has entered into salvic blessings secured by the death of Jesus . . . and this is certainly true. When one considers how many things were sprinkled by blood or water in the Old Testament, sprinkling is not an unreasonable, unbiblical practice.

Historically, Latourette and other church historians find evidence that emersion was the primary means of baptism in early church history (Latourette, 1975). Baptism was a serious affair. Candidates were questioned on their faith. If they passed the test, they were baptized in cold, running water—preferably a pure, clear stream: Children first, then men, and finally the women. They were baptized naked. Nothing was taken into the water but their body. Following their baptism, the bishop placed salt on the tongue as a symbol they must follow Christ, speak the truth for him, and be prepared to die for their Lord.

Personally, I do not think the mode of baptism (sprinkling or immersion) should be an issue of fellowship. But, I do believe that immersion is a better picture of being identified with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ than sprinkling. In modern times, building codes, have made it practically impossible to build simple baptismal in churches. A building code in Albuquerque required that churches provide wheel chair access into the tank. When engineers drafted a plan, the cost for providing wheel chair access was over a hundred thousand dollars. The church literally left the plastic tank sit in the back of the church as an ugly eye sore. Can anyone say, “sprinkling?”

### **WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?**

Usually, an ordained minister will assist new Christians in obeying the Lord in baptism. Church practices and policies vary from denomination to denomination. On the day of Pentecost, over 3000 people were baptized, and on another occasion over 5000 men and possibly that many women and children were baptized as well (Acts 4:4). I can’t imagine twelve apostles baptizing five-thousand men and possibly a total of ten thousand to twelve thousand people in one day. They must have had help! When Philip went preaching the gospel, he baptized the Ethiopian eunuch. He did not seem to be too concerned about “proper authority.” If a person is a Christian, he has authority to make disciples and baptize new converts by virtue of our Lord’s command in Matthew 28. Every mature Christian has the responsibility to instruct others about baptism, and if necessary, to service the baptismal needs of new converts. I do not see that God placed a limitation on who can do the baptizing. As long as it is done with dignity and for the right reason, any believer can baptize another believer.

### **WHAT IF I WAS BAPTIZED AS A CHILD**

MacArthur: Baptism is for believers, for people who have come to an age of responsibility and made a personal, independent decision to follow Christ. Infant baptism or pre-conversion baptism not only gives false hope, it confuses issues regarding one’s salvation. It is not a true statement of conversion. It was something done to you by well-meaning people, but it required no act of faith or obedience on your part. Those baptized as unconverted children have the "cart before the horse." Baptism is something one does after he accepts Christ and not before (John 1:10-12; Acts 10:47). If you had parents that dedicated you to the Lord when you were a baby, you are blessed. If you were baptized as a child or before your true conversion by the will of another, then assert your will now in obedience to Christ and submit to believer’s baptism. It is the correct course of action.

### **SHOULD A CHURCH REQUIRE BAPTISM FOR MEMBERSHIP?**

When one receives Christ as Savior, he automatically becomes a member of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-14). Water baptism does not make one a part of His Body, but it may identify him or her with a particular gathering of believers. Christ commanded baptism. It is the will of God.

*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:41-42).*

But, to do as some SBC churches do and require Christians who were baptized in another Christian denomination to resubmit to baptism in an SBC church denies the unity of the church of Jesus Christ.

### **SHOULD A PERSON BE REBAPTIZED?**

One should get baptized once as a statement, a symbol of his identification with Christ after his conversion. One need not get baptized again to become a member of a church, nor should a believer ever get baptized again to join another church. This would deny the unity of the body of Christ. The church should accept all Christians who have made a profession of faith, and have submitted to believer's baptism in other evangelical churches after their conversion.

### **WHERE SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?**

Whether you are baptized in a river, or a lake, or a chapel is immaterial to God. He is simply interested in obedience (Acts 8:36).

### **BAPTISMAL REGENERATION**

Dave Armstrong says the following: Scripture seems to clearly refer to baptismal regeneration: John 3:5, Acts 2:38 (*forgiveness of sins*), 22:16 (*wash away your sins*), Romans 6:3-4, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Titus 3:5 (*he saved us . . . by the washing of regeneration*), and other passages.

Many denominations have held to the position of baptismal regeneration which is anathema to the Baptist / Presbyterian / and Reformed branches of Protestantism. The Reformers taught *sola Scriptura* as the authority for action, and *sola fide* as the prerequisite for salvation. But, not all doctrines were worked through during the time of the Reformers.

Luther largely agreed with the Catholic position on sacramental and regenerative infant baptism:

*Little children . . . are free in every way, secure and saved solely through the glory of their baptism . . . Through the prayer of the believing church which presents it, . . . the infant is changed, cleansed, and renewed by in poured faith. Nor should I doubt that even a godless adult could be changed, in any of the sacraments, if the same church prayed for and presented him, as we read of the paralytic in the Gospel, who was healed through the faith of others (Mark 2:3-12). I should be ready to admit that in this sense the sacraments of the New Law are efficacious in conferring grace, not only to those who do not, but even to those who do most obstinately present an obstacle." (Luther, The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, 1520; 1970, p 197).*

Therefore, we need to review some Biblical passages that appear to support baptismal regeneration.

### **THE INTERPRETATION OF JOHN 3**

In John 3:5, Jesus said,

*“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”*

Some interpreters say that “water” represents baptism and therefore baptize people with the intent of saving their souls. Those that teach baptismal regeneration usually cite Acts 2:38 as their proof text. But, what does Peter’s sermon have to do with the interpretation of John 3?

So, what are the possible interpretations for water in John 3?

The **first** possibility is that “water” is a symbol of the amniotic fluid at human birth. Some even go so far as stating that water and rain and dew can be a symbol of semen (Hugo, Odeberg, and Morris). There is certainly contextual evidence for this view seeing that Nicodemus asked the question in verse four, “How can a man enter his mother’s womb a second time and be born?” But, the problem with this view is that there does not appear to be any ancient text that talks about birth “out of water.”

**Second**, the word “water” could represent the “**the Word of God**.” While the concept of the “the Word of God” is not found in John 3, it is found in John 15 of the same book. John 15:3 states, “You are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you.” Further, the concept of being born again by the Word of God is consistent with the period in which John wrote (Ephesians 5:26: 1 Peter 1:23). The problem, however, with this view is that it seems to be forcing an interpretation on the text.

A **third** possibility is that the word “water” could represent **the Spirit**. There is evidence for this view in the passage. The Greek word *kai* (and) can be translated “and” or “even.” Jesus could be saying, “A man must be born of water, even by the Spirit.” Further, Jesus addresses the role of the Spirit at least four times in this passage placing an emphasis on spiritual birth. Water is sometimes a symbol of the Spirit. Jesus definitely says that water is a symbol of the Spirit in John 7:27-28. In Ezekiel 36:25-27 water and spirit are linked together. Furthermore, “water” and “spirit” are two nouns linked together by one Greek conjunction in a prepositional phrase. Water and spirit could be the same. Possibly, Jesus is using water as symbol to introduce the need of regeneration by the Holy Spirit – this is the position that I take.

**Fourth**, Jesus does not chastise Nicodemus, but he does question his qualifications for leadership by saying, “You being a leader in Israel do not know these things?” (3:10). The context gives us permission to go outside the text and search the OT for teaching on the possible meaning of the “water.” Ezekiel 36:25-27 may be what Jesus has in mind. Maybe Jesus speaks of water and spirit to introduce the dual action of the spirit; i.e. He cleanses and He regenerates.

**Fifth**, water baptism is a possibility. The word “baptism” is mentioned six times in the book of John (John 1:26, 133; 3:22, 23; 4:1, 2; 10:40). The best evidence for water as a symbol for baptism is the context. Baptism is mentioned twice in chapter three. Jesus himself baptized people. However, I reject this interpretation for the following reasons: If baptism is necessary for salvation, one would think that Jesus would have issued a command for people to be baptized in John. There is no such command to be baptized in John or the other gospels for salvation. If baptism is necessary for salvation, why isn’t baptism commanded in the Gospel of John?

Not only is there not command for men to be baptized, there is no command to be “born again.” It is a spiritual phenomenon. Just as a man cannot chose his physical birth, he cannot chose to be born again!.

The key response required by John is faith (3:16; 36; 5:24). John states the purpose of his book is that people might believe and possess eternal life. Baptism is not mentioned as a prerequisite for salvation.

The apostle also wrote 1 John, another letter dedicated to obtaining eternal life (5:10-13), and nowhere is there a command to be baptized in that book.

Further, baptism as prerequisite for salvation is inconsistent with Paul's statement, "I thank God I baptized none of you" (1 Corinthians 1:14). If baptism saves, how could Paul possibly give thanks that he baptized no one in Corinth? "Selah."

Taking "water" as a symbol of baptism is inconsistent with the context. Jesus does not go on to argue the need for Nicodemus to be baptized. He goes on to argue the need for spiritual birth and then calls Nicodemus to look at God's hope in history (2:14) and to believe in Christ (3:14-16).

**Sixth**, condemnation, the antithesis of eternal life, is not based upon unbaptism, but upon unbelief (3:16-17). The text of Jesus' condemns unbelief, but it does not assign the unbaptized to the wrath of God. Judgment awaits the unbeliever (John 3:36).

### **THE INTERPRETATION OF ACTS 2:38**

*Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

Pe,troj de. pro.j auvtou,j( Metanoh,sate( ĭfhsi,n(Đ kai. baptisqh,tw e(kastoj u`mw/n evpi.  
tw/| ovno,mati Vlhsou/ Cristou/ eivj a;fesin tw/n a`martiw/n u`mw/n kai. lh,myesqe th.n  
dwrea.n tou/ a`gi,ou pneu,matoj ( <sup>GNT</sup>Acts 2:38).

Those who teach baptismal regeneration use Acts 2:38 as a proof text to demonstrate their belief that baptism is necessary for the forgiveness of sins. So, how should we interpret this text?

**First, the Book of Acts is an historical, legal book;** that is, Luke is summarizing the history of the early church. He show the effects of the claims of the gospel to the jury of the Roman world. It is always dangerous to go to an historical book to PROVE a doctrine. The superior approach is to build doctrine on doctrinal books like Romans or Ephesians or Hebrews.

**Second**, Peter's audience is entirely Jewish -- the very crowd that crucified their Messiah. He is not addressing Gentiles or "normal" sinners. One would expect the apostle to have a special edict for this crowd--the crowd that had 50 days earlier shouted "Crucify him!" Jesus was crucified by Jews! And, Peter did. He demanded immediate repentance and baptism by his Jewish audience.

**Third**, the Greek of Acts 2:38 does not support baptism as the first and fundamental pre-requisite of forgiveness. There are three clauses with three verbs. The expositor must understand the three key verbs and their number to interpret Peter's command correctly.

The word "**repent**" (Metanoh,sate) is a **second person plural**, aorist imperative. It is in the emphatic position, indicating that **this is the key command** in Peter's invitation. It is plural indicating that Peter is addressing the whole crowd, and it is *ingressive* in Greek indicating that the command must be initiated at once.

The second command is about baptism (baptisqh,tw e(kastoj), and it forms the second clause in the sentence. The command, "Let each of you be baptized") is an aorist, passive imperative, **third person singular**. The fact that Peter switches to the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular indicates that he is now addressing individuals. The imperative is in the passive indicating that the individual is "to let" himself be baptized

or “submit” to the act of baptism. The action of baptism is something the repentant are to let happen to them. This is the required individual action, but it is **not** the primary action required. **The primary action** required by Peter is **REPENT!**

**The purpose clause** “*for forgiveness of sins of you*” relates back to the purpose of the **major command**, “**Repent!**” The word “*for*” (eivj) can be translated “into” or “because of.” The verb, “*you may receive*” (lh,myesqe), is a future, middle deponent, indicative, **second person plural**. Note the plural!!

The plural takes us back to **the main verb**, “**Repent**” (a plural). Peter is saying this, “You all repent (plural) and you all (plural) shall receive (plural) the gift of the Holy Spirit, and then, let each of you individually allow himself to be baptized.” The imperative “baptism” is singular and is **not** the essential response required for forgiveness of sins or for the reception of the Holy Spirit.

Do not hear what is not being said. This expositor is **not** saying people should not be baptized as evidence of repentance, but he is saying that baptism is not the fundamental response that procures forgiveness. At least it cannot be proven from this verse. Furthermore, baptism may be a key indicator of repentance, but repentance and change of heart, not baptism, is what secures forgiveness.

As a way of proof that baptism does not save the soul or bring the individual in contact with the blood, one need only look at the Book of John and 1 John. Jesus’ closest disciple wrote both. Neither contains a command to be baptized to secure eternal life. **Faith** is the **only** prerequisite advanced for salvation through the apostle.

## **BAPTISM AND CIRCUMCISION**

*Colossians 2:11-13 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;*

First, we must understand the issue. People in the covenant camp who baptize infants use this verse to support their view that infants should be baptized. Many reason this way: Since Abraham circumcised Isaac as a covenant symbol, the church should baptize children as a covenant symbol; that is, infant baptism (sprinkling) replaces circumcision as the sign of the covenant. This is the position of R.C. Sproul and the Covenant Camp. Infant baptism spring from a logical connection with OT circumcision.

At first glance, this reasoning appears to be sound, but a closer look reveals something different. The word “*circumcision*” in this text is a *metaphor* that refers to *the piritual operation of Christ* at the time of salvation; that is, the act of God that separates a believer from his sins (dia. th/j pi,stewj th/j evnergei,aj tou/ qeou/). This separation is appropriately called “*circumcision*.” “*Circumcision . . . stands in contrast to baptism, not in correlation with it*” (Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, 1974).

Not only is the believer ***separated*** from his sins at the time of faith, he is immediately ***identified*** with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; i.e. he is united to the victorious history of Christ. “Baptism” is the Biblical word for this *identification*. This is **not** water baptism, but the act of God that places the

believer into the family of God – into the history of Christ to share in the benefits of Christ’s victorious history.

**Two thoughts** run concurrently in this section, *separation* and *identification*; that is, separation from our sins and identification with the blessings of Christ’s redemptive history. To read into this text the whole of covenant theology appears to be more eisegesis than exegesis.

## **PAEDOBAPTISM**

This section addresses the question, “Should Christians baptize babies?” from a Baptist perspective.

(Note important abbreviations: OT = Old Testament; NT = New Testament; OC = Old Covenant; NC = New Covenant)

## **OBSERVATIONS ABOUT PAEDOBAPTISM**

The position held by R.C. Sproul and Covenant Theologians: Just as parent circumcised their children in the OT as a duty of the Abrahamic Covenant, Christians baptize their children as a duty of the New Covenant.

John McArthur and those who perpetuate believer’s baptism advance the following:

One of the main themes of the Bible is covenants. A covenant is another term for “contract.” Life is all about contracts!! One of the elements of a contract is competent parties. Babies are not competent parties, but parents are competent parties.

There is the Old Covenant (OC), a.k.a. the **Mosaic Covenant** which in some sense is an extension of the Abrahamic Covenant, and the **New Covenant (NC)** which is a fulfillment or perfecting of the Abrahamic Covenant. Jesus is the Mediator of the NC which is superior to the OC (Hebrews 8:6; 12:24) in several ways:

**The NC cannot be broken;** that is, its beneficiaries cannot be disenfranchised because of disobedience. It is an “unbreakable” covenant wherein no flesh will be “cut off” from His kingdom (Genesis 17:14). It is not possible for Covenanters to break this covenant. When paedobaptists speak of their “covenant children” as “breaking covenant” (becoming profligate or apostate to the faith) an anomaly occurs. How can a true “covenant child” ever “break faith?” It is not possible. At least, not under the NC.

**Each beneficiary of the NC “knows God,”** has the law embedded in his heart, has a relationship with God, and experiences true forgiveness (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Not everyone under the OC knew God. In fact, many of them were idolaters and went to hell. But, in the NC “**ALL know me**” said the Lord, “**from the least to the greatest.**” In fact, no man is a participant in the NC unless he knows God. And, all who know God know him savingly! This statement is not of secondary importance but primary to understanding the difference between the OC and the NC.

Unlike the OC which contained believing and unbelieving Israelites, **the NC is made only with believers in Christ**, the elect of God. You have to believe in Christ to be a member of the covenant community; that is, there are no unbelieving covenant children in the NC. None!

**Every covenant member of the New Israel has repented, trusted Christ, and is a partaker of the benefits of the gospel.** There are no exceptions. All covenant members have experienced salvation;

otherwise, they are not part of the NC community. No one is in covenant with God who is not a believer. No one!!

A baby does not know God and cannot possibly believe and be a member of the New Covenant Community.

Believer's baptism is for those who hear the Word, believe, and receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44, 47). Baptism is not for those who may hear and believe and receive the Holy Spirit sometime in the future. Thus, the elect believe and only the elect are in the NC community. Thus, baptism always follows faith in the New Testament. The Ordu Salutis is "Repent and be baptized" or "Believe and be baptized," but it is never "be baptized and then believe."

There is not one reference in the NT of a baby or infant being baptized; however, there is overwhelming evidence that only adults (competent to contract) were baptized. R. C. Sproul agrees with this statement.

The prerequisite for baptism in the NT is clearly "faith and repentance" and since infants cannot repent and believe, baptism should be reserved for those who can hear, learn, know and believe (Acts 5:31; 8:37; 11:18; 13:24; 13:39; 15:11; 20:21).

**MacArthur:** Infant baptism is simply not in the NT. It is not mentioned in the Bible, and the apostles did not advocate or teach infant baptism. Further, there is no example of infant baptism in Scripture. All traces of infant baptism are by inference—a presumption and an argument from silence. That is, when paedobaptists discuss infant baptism, they **must insert** the doctrine into the Scripture they are reading. Interpreters call this "eisegesis" or reading into the text or the New Testament what is not there.

Infant baptism is not in the Scripture, but **Christian baptism is**. While there is plenty of textual support for Christian baptism, there is no direct support for infant baptism. Infant baptism is only supported by inference. It is a postulate or hypothesis or conjecture and not a NT fact.

The meaning of Christian baptism contains at the least the following:

- (A) Christian baptism is the profession of faith in the historicity of Christ;
- (B) a statement that the baptized has received salvic blessings won by the accomplishments of Christ (justification, regeneration, forgiveness, and eternal life to mention a few);
- (C) that the baptized has repented and been cleansed of sin due to his faith in the Savior; and,
- (D) that he is now a member of the covenant community, the church, the redeemed. None of the so called "baptisms" of the OT contained these meanings. Paedobaptists smother the true meaning of baptism by forcing a "covenant child" import on infant baptism—an inference alien to the NT.

Christian baptism requires obedience of believing men. Once baptized, Christians know that they have been obedient to Him. Infant baptism is not based on the obedience of the baptized nor does it leave the baptized with confidence of having obeyed the Lord.

### **An Argument Against Infant Baptism**

Infant baptism injures no one. It is not the act of being sprinkled that is harmful, but the spurious presumptions that spring up surrounding the rite.



- Is it not true that people who have been baptized as a baby tend to believe they are Christian just because they were baptized as a baby?
- Is it not true, that many or most of those baptized as infants possess **a false assurance** they are God's child and on their way to heaven?
- Is it not true, that those baptized as a baby do not generally feel the need to accept Christ and surrender to Christian baptism later in life?
- Is it not true that the baptizing of unbelievers is contrary to Scripture?
- It is not true that baptized non-Christians are on their way to hell and are as lost as those who have never been baptized?

Christian baptism testifies to a redeemed church that the baptized have placed their faith in Christ; Infant baptism does not augur well for a redeemed church; rather, paedobaptists foster an ideology that the church is composed of saved and unsaved covenant children. It destroys the redeemed church ideal—the truth that the church is made up of all who have experienced the first fruits of Christ's kingdom reign. Paedobaptists are filling their churches with **baptized-unbelievers** and calling them "**covenant children**" – **an untruth**.

**Kurt Aland**, a Lutheran Scholar, says of infant baptism, "There is no definite proof of the practice until after the 3<sup>rd</sup> century." He says, "This cannot be contested."

**Professor Hegerbocker** (sp.), a Catholic theologian, states. "This controversy has shown that it is not possible *to bring in absolute proof of infant baptism* by basing one's argument on the Bible."

**The Anglican Church**, who practices infant baptism, did a study on baptism in 1955. The report states: "Every expression in the New Testament concerning the rights of baptism assumes that the convert receives them with living faith and a renunciation of his old former life." Adults with living faith—what a concept! Sounds Baptist to me! (John McArthur, Grace to You).

The great theme of the Reformation was "*sola fide*," "*sola gratia*," and "*sola scriptura*." Yet, when it comes to the subject of infant baptism, **Paedobaptists betray their rallying cry of "Sola Scriptura"** on the subject of infant baptism; that is, Paedobaptists seem to be content to move forward with the practice of infant baptism *despite the lack of Scriptural support for its practice*. Don't misunderstand. Paedobaptists can quote dozens of verses to support their view . . . but not one of them encourage or command infant baptism either explicitly or implicitly. **Infant baptism is manufactured theology (eisegesis)**, not one that flows out of Biblical statements (**exegesis**).

Paedobaptists create a situation wherein churches are filled with baptized non-Christians. As these people grow up, they more often than not consider themselves Christians having no need to repent and be converted to Christ.

It is also true that Baptist churches have the presence of baptized non-believers . . . but that is never the intent, hope, wish or design on the part of Baptist people. However, it is the design, intent, and purpose of those practicing paedobaptists. Their purpose seems to be to fill their churches with baptized unbelievers. Reformed theologians know that babies do not have faith. Why do they do this?

Paedobaptists create entire communities of **baptized non-Christians** who have never been baptized by the Holy Spirit; never repented; and never believed in Christ. Thus, local churches become filled with a massive population of unbaptized, professing Christians. Often times, the gigantic obstacle that hinders the baptized-nonbelievers in coming to true faith is their infant baptism. Thus, paedobaptism becomes **a hurdle to jump rather than a bridge to cross**.

Paedobaptists do not encourage re-baptism of a repentant baptized non-believer if they become a true Christian. Historically, Paedobaptists persecuted those called “Anabaptist” and often brutally and savagely murdered them . . . and many will hack and slice an opponent of this doctrine even today.

Paedobaptists often state, “The New Testament nowhere commands us to baptize infants, *but neither does it anywhere forbid it*” (italics mine). This is **an argument from silence** and it is a flawed hermeneutic when “silence” is as authoritative as what is written. Should a pastor advocate polygamy since *it does not anywhere forbid it*?

**The only way to be a part of the NC community is to believe in Christ.** Paedobaptists make much of “covenant children!!” They believe that infant baptism qualifies them for certain benefits. While non-believing Israelites could partake of the blessings of the OC, the same is not true under the contract terms of the NC. In the NC, only believers inherit the benefits of the gospel. Baptized non-believers receive NO COVENANT BENEFITS! None! Children are not interns ready to graduate to covenant membership. Only those who receive Christ as Savior become children of God (John 1:12-13). Isn’t that true? Consequently, **there is no such doctrine as “covenant children.”** That is, Paedobaptists error when they “Christianize” the Old Testament, and “Judaize” the New Testament.

Paedobaptists maximize circumcision links with baptism and ignore dissimilarities. Attempts to equate circumcision with baptism are clearly a species of “Christianizing” the Old Testament as if it were the New Testament. It involves *selective hermeneutics*; that is, absorbing what is convenient while expelling inconvenient truth. It maximizes continuity and minimizes discontinuity. For example, the warrant for infant baptism by paedobaptists is the faith of parents. But, in the OT, the warrant for circumcision was not faith, but lineage connected to Abraham.

Paedobaptists look to the “faith of parents” as a warrant to baptize children; but the Bible warrants baptism based on hearing the gospel and belief in its claims. Further, Israelite priests circumcised infants regardless of the faith of parents. A warrant of faith was never required before circumcising a baby boy under the OC.

Paedobaptists are inconsistent. They require / encourage infant baptism because of the mandatory circumcision requirement under the OC, however, they ignore the “covenant meal” a.k.a. “the breaking of bread,” or the “Passover Meal.” In the OT all children ate and enjoyed and participated in the Seder, a ritualized meal that celebrated their exodus from Egypt. However, paedobaptists do not always encourage their children to participate in the Lord’s Supper. They allow for continuity between circumcision and infant baptism, but they practice discontinuity between the Passover Meal and the “covenant meal.”

Without a doubt, Baptists have been the most evangelical of evangelicals because Baptist doctrine teaches that all men are lost and that all men need a Savior. Presbyterians, while not opposed to evangelism, generally lag behind their Baptist brothers in the field of evangelism. Evangelistic sloth exists in part because of the lack of urgency which is choked by beliefs associated with infant baptism. Infant baptism

smoothers the urgency for unbelieving adults and unbelieving youth to receive Christ as their Savior so they can indeed be true children of God (NC children).

### **ANSWERS TO FUNDAMENTALISTS' ASSERTIONS BY PAEDOBAPTISTS**

The following response is based on Phillip G. Kayser, CPA: “Seven Biblical Principles which call for Infant Baptism.” (Note: I know Dr. Kayser and am an admirer of his ministry, his values, and his church. This criticism should not be taken as a criticism of the man or his life. His work was chosen because it augurs well for paedobaptism.)

**Principle One:** The Old Testament (OT) says a lot about baptism; let’s not ignore it. The argument here is that the Old Testament is filled with a plethora of baptisms and that infant baptism is a logical extension of these biblical practices. As circumcision is a symbol, baptism is a symbol. Kaiser and Sproul argue Abraham circumcised Isaac before he believed. All Hebrews were circumcised and then believed. Likewise, it is appropriate to baptize children of Christian parents.

**Answer:** Kaiser encourages Christians to be Berean. Agreed! I did a search on the term “baptism” in three versions of the Bible and could not find the term “baptism” in the OT. Possibly, Hebrews 6:2 refers to OT baptisms, but it more likely refers to one of the seven baptisms mentioned in the NT. Kayser must be referring to OT washings and purification ceremonies using blood or water. He admits, “the new is in the Old concealed and the old is in the New revealed;” that is, Kayser is basing infant baptism on a concealed doctrine in the OT. Nevertheless, many holy things were sprinkled with blood and water . . . as a symbol or metaphor for cleansing. The Paedobaptists are brethren and their reasoning is sound.

First, basing any major Christian practice on something that is “concealed” is a flawed hermeneutic. Using this reasoning, you could prove just about anything from the OT. But, the relationship between circumcision and baptism is compelling even to this Baptist.

Secondly, Paedobaptists often make the mistake of “Christianizing” the OT as if it were the New and “Judaizing” the NT as if it were the Old. Paedobaptists are stressing a presence of NT baptism in the OT which is simply not there. While it is true that OT Israel had purification ceremonies, washed their hands, and took baths, it is a stretch to read these as seminal “baptisms” practiced in the NT.

Further, Kayser emphasizes, “we must submit to the unity of the whole.” Agreed. But, while paedobaptists rightly affirm the unity of redemption in all ages, they questionably squeeze together concepts in a way that suppresses the diversity of God’s administrations in covenant history—thus, Christianizing the Old and Judaizing the New.

**Principle Two:** Our children have always been in the covenant. Every covenant God makes includes our children, and the NT has not changed this principle. Kayser asks, “Where has the New Testament excluded children from the covenant?” Good question!

**Answer:** First, let me say that a longing to have our children know Christ and participate in the benefits of the gospel is a wonderful thing, but nowhere does the OT or NT mention “covenant children.” While the Israelite families were part of the Old Covenant, many or most of these families were unbelievers. Israel was composed of Semitic blood, with physical descendants that comprised a nation—a nation with geographical borders. This is simply not the case in the New Testament. The “New Israel,” the church, knows no borders and has no genetic seam. It’s foundation is built on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly, there is no such thing as “covenant children” in the NT. Using the term “covenant children” is so common place among Presbyterians, they create a presumption it is a Biblical doctrine. Not so! While unbelievers could be a part of the OC community, **an unbeliever has no part in the NC community.** **Everyone in the NC “knows God,” has the law “written in his heart,” and has their sins forgiven** (Jeremiah 31:31ff). **ONLY** believers are part of the NC. Unbelievers do not participate in the benefits of the gospel. Unbelieving children, baptized or unbaptized, are not “covenant children.” The **ONLY** way to be God’s child is to believe in Christ and to receive Him as Savior and Lord (John 1:12-13; Romans 10:9-10).

Third, calling unbelieving children “covenant children” **gives the false impression** that they are already children of God by virtue of being born in a Christian family. Infants born into Christian families and “baptized” are no more “covenant children” than children born in a garage are automobiles. While it is a blessing to be born into a Christian home, it is no guarantee that child will be a member of the elect of God.

Fourth, while unbelieving children under the OC were beneficiaries of a genetic relationship in Israelite families, the same is not true under the terms of the NC. The right to become children of God is based on reception of Christ; that is, being a child of God is not based on being “born of blood” (genetic or familia relationship). He must personally receive Christ as Savior. Isn’t this what the text says (John 1:12- 13)?

**Principle #3:** Faith and repentance have the same importance now that they had with Abraham and the sign of the covenant. Kayser agrees with the Baptist doctrine that “faith” and “repentance” must always precede baptism (for adults), but disagrees that infant baptism is an exception to this rule. In discussing Acts 8:37, Kayser observes, “. . . notice the text says nothing about infants.” He reasons that because the text does not forbid infant baptism, it must permit it.

**Answer:** Kayser agrees with the Baptists that faith and repentance are pre-requisite to Christian baptism. His assertion “the text says nothing about infants” **is an argument from silence**. In America, all law must be written. ***If it is not written, it is not law.*** Likewise, it is not wise to assume a doctrine that is not clearly specified in the text. If it is not written, then it is *presumption*. To say that “faith and repentance” are necessary for adult baptism, but to assert that because the text does not condemn infant baptism it must be accepted is non sequitur. **NO ONE IS IN COVENANT** with God who has not repented and believed. No one!

**Principle # 4:** To deny infant baptism is to deny the “everlasting” character of one of three “everlasting signs” given in the Old Testament. The argument is that the Abrahamic sign of circumcision is replaced by the infant baptism; that to deny infant baptism is to deny the unity of the Testaments.

**Answer:** The sign of being in the NC community was reception of the Holy Spirit; that is, spiritual, inward regeneration and renewal. Baptism is an outward profession of faith—a statement that one has experienced kingdom blessings by virtue of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. While it is a nice thought to connect the OC sign of circumcision and the NC symbol of baptism, the NT Scripture never makes that connection either explicitly or implicitly; that is, to link “infant baptism” with Abraham’s sign of the covenant is **manufactured theology**—a deduction **not** supported by fact. It is curious, but there isn’t a lick of support for it in the NT. Furthermore, circumcision stands in contrast to baptism, not in correlation with it! Again, the Paedobaptists are stressing continuity while ignoring discontinuity between the Testaments. For example: Only boys were circumcised under the OC. Israelite baby girls had no such “sign.” If we attempt pure continuity between the Testaments; between geo-political Israel and the New

Israel, then paedobaptists should only baptize male infants . . . and that on the 8<sup>th</sup> day—something not practiced by Paedobaptists.

The only external sign ordered by Christ for NT believers was that of Christian baptism. Ideally, when an adult repents and believes, he is born again. He is an infant spiritually and as such submits to baptism, the outward symbol of his union with Christ. Infant baptism puts the cart before the horse; baptism before faith; presumed membership in the NC community before any expression of knowledge, or faith, or repentance. Thus, paedobaptists' churches are filled with baptized, non-Christians.

**Principle # 5:** Baptism is the New Testament counterpart to circumcision, and the baptized Gentile is “counted as if” circumcised (Romans 2:26; Colossians 2:11ff). Here the paedobaptists links OT circumcision with “infant baptism” advocating infant baptism as the replacement sign of OT circumcision: “In this section we will be demonstrating the Baptism is the New Testament counterpart to circumcision.

**Answer:** Here again, the paedobaptists stresses continuity but overlooks, or ignores, significant discontinuities in both **the meaning** and **practice** of circumcision and baptism. Paedobaptists maximize similarities, and minimize dissimilarities between the two. The Baptist denies that the meaning and significance of circumcision and baptism are the same.

Now, if the early church thought that baby baptism was a replacement for circumcision—why isn't it clearly taught in the New Testament? If infant baptism and circumcision have the same meaning, then why did the Apostles insist on baptizing Jews who were already circumcised? If baptism replaces circumcision, why did Paul insist on Timothy's circumcision? If circumcision and baptism are similar in meaning, why did Paul protest and demonstrate against Jews who wanted to circumcise the new Gentile converts?

The meanings of the two are not the same: Circumcision specified membership in the physical community of Israel, the geo-political nation, and ethnic identification. Baptism emphasizes one's identification with the New Adam and His glorious history. Keep in mind, there is no geo-political community, no nationhood, no geographical boundaries, no ethnic homogeneousness in the NT community. Circumcision was a symbol of physical participation in the temporal features of Abrahamic Covenant. Circumcision had no “spiritual” implication. In fact, **the majority of circumcised Israelites plunged into idolatry and went to hell**. Every participant in the NC knows God and experiences all the NC blessings!! Believer's baptism is a sign of profession of faith that one believes in Christ and His historical accomplishments. Christian **Baptism makes no ethnic, economic, social, or geo-political statement!** Circumcision did.

The promises in the OT were primarily physical: “I will make you fruitful; “kings will come from you; “You shall be the head and not the tail.” These physical blessing could be enjoyed even by unbelieving members of the OT community. However, none of these blessing apply to NT believers. Rather, the NT believer is granted the spiritual blessings of the kingdom to enjoy now in advance of the future, physical manifestations of the kingdom. Justification, regeneration, forgiveness, and the possession of eternal life characterize the *age to come*. Because of Christ's entrance into *this age* believers are allowed to enjoy kingdom blessing in a first fruits way in advance of the full manifestation of the kingdom of God (Ephesians 1:3-7).

Many paedobaptists interpret Colossians 2:11-12 as teaching that baptism and circumcision have replaced each other, and have the same exact significance. In response, Baptists agree that there is an overlap of meaning between OT circumcision and NT circumcision. What we deny is the identity of meaning between the two signs. They are *contrasted*, **not** *correlated*. In Colossians, Paul is addressing believers, not babies, not infants, not geo-political Israel. The circumcision addressed is spiritual circumcision, the separation of sins from the believer (not the unbelieving infant) by virtue of the benefits of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Those who have rejected Adamic man and identified themselves with the new Adam, have been raised with Christ through their faith. Thus the concept of circumcision has been transformed in the New Testament to denote those who have experienced salvation in Christ and been separated from their sins. It is this inward experience of spiritual circumcision that is tied to baptism in the New Testament—not infant circumcision / baptism!

**Principle # 6:** God treats the children of believers differently from the world on many levels; that is, the term “sanctification” in 1 Corinthians seven bestows special benefits of the new covenant on the children of believers; that is, their children are not “unclean” like pagans. They are destined for a special work of grace in their hearts.

**Answer:** Baptists do not deny that children of believing parents are “sanctified” (separated) or that it is a privilege and blessing to be born into a Christian home. The problem is this: the paedobaptist is making more of the term “sanctified” than can be found in the text; that is, the paedobaptist uses this text to cram in benefits and blessings of the NC not intended by Paul. Paedobaptists deposit a truck-load of meaning into the text that is not there. This is *eisegesis*—a reading into the text more than is really there.

Second, the context is “keeping the home together” even with an unconverted spouse. The “holiness” promised here is that as the blessing of God is poured upon the believing spouse, that blessing is going to wonderfully touch the life of the unbelieving husband . . . and unbelieving children . . . that they are set aside for special consideration. It doesn’t mean the unbelieving spouse or child is a “believer” or “member of the covenant” or “a guarantee” one will become a part of the believing community or that those children are now guaranteed a place in heaven, or that infants should be baptized.

Third, not only are children “sanctified” but so is the “unbelieving” spouse. If children are “covenantally holy,” shouldn’t the unbelieving husband or wife be considered “covenantally holy”? The same word is applied to both. Thus, if paedobaptists insist on baptizing babies because they are now “sanctified” by the faith of the believing parent, *why not insist on baptizing the unbelieving spouse because they are now sanctified?* Well, it’s much easier to baptize an infant who can’t defend himself than a mature adult who can resist ecclesiastical authority.

Fourth, in Acts 10:28, Peter learned a lesson that he was not to call men “unclean” (akatharton).” He was doing a new work in history, and it demanded a new way of thinking about holiness: “But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure (koinon) or unclean (akatharton).” In the context, it is obvious that Peter is speaking about external, covenantal holiness, based upon external membership in the OT community. Thus the very thing which God commanded Peter not to do (call men “unclean” because of their ethnicity), paedobaptists do with respect to the children of non-Christians (call them unclean). Such distinctions are abolished in the New Covenant era.

**Principle # 7: Household Baptism:** While Kayser designates one or two pages to principles one through six, he devotes thirteen pages to his final argument—a hodgepodge of statements designed to support the practice of infant baptism. I will focus only on the main point, that of “household baptism.” This

argument asserts that the families baptized in the NT must have had babies and young children, and if they whole house was baptized, so the apostles must have baptized babies.

**Answer:** There are four instances of household baptism in the NT: Cornelius, Acts 10:46-48; Lydia's household, Acts 16:15; the Philippian Jailer, Acts 16:33; and, the House of Stephanas, 1 Corinthians 1:16.

**Household baptism can only be justified if there is a household conversion.** The Baptist position is that all who heard believed, and those that believed were baptized. In brief, the paedobaptist, in order to perpetuate his view of infant baptism, must insert it in all texts (eisegesis) what is NOT THERE! **All traces of infant baptism are by inference—a presumption and an argument based on silence**

Peter's warrant for baptizing the **household of Cornelius** was that "they have received the Holy Spirit as we have" (Acts 10). It was not just the head of the home that was converted, but his family, friends, and servants. Those baptized were, "All who heard the message." Thus, household baptism was justified based on the household conversion of "all who heard the message."

Paul baptized **Lydia's household** because they responded with faith to Paul's message (Acts 16:15). Her native city was 300 miles away. Again, we have an argument for silence. There is no indication Lydia was married or had nursing children. It is more reasonable to assume that Lydia was a business woman with helpers in her home-based business. To read infants into this event grates against the context. Furthermore, to think that unbelieving and nonconsenting adults were baptized also goes against the text. It is reasonable to assume that all that heard were competent adults; that all believed; and, therefore all consented to baptism.

Paul baptized the Philippian jailer's household (Acts 16:22). The text in 16:34 definitely highlights the joy of the Philippian jailer. The text says that Paul spoke the Word to "him together with all who were in his house." Again, we have a household baptism based on a household conversion. There is nothing to suggest that the jailer's wife had a nursing infant and that Paul baptized the infant in the middle of the night. The whole household heard the gospel. The whole household believed. The whole household was baptized. The whole context supports the *ordu salutis*: hear, believe, obey the Lord in baptism, and rejoice in salvation history.

In reference to the House of Stephanus the text says that Paul baptized the household of Stephanas (1 Corinthians 1:16) and that "*they devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints*" (16:15). We have a household conversion and thus a household baptism. The makeup of this household is not known, but the text does assert the family devoted themselves to Christian service. It is possible an infant was baptized, but it appears improbable an infant could devote itself to the "service of the saints."

Finally, paedobaptists do not practice household baptism nor do they achieve household conversions. Instead of practicing household baptism, **they force baptism** on those who lack the power to resist (babies) — which is a form of religious despotism — the powerful over the powerless.

### **A DEFENSE OF PAEODOBAPTISM**

RC Sproul has the best argument for infant baptism that I have ever heard. Sproul agrees with the Baptist position of Believer's baptism and that there is no NT argument for the practice saying "the preferred mode of baptism is by emersion; but, in relation to children, sprinkling is more appropriate."

Paedobaptists believe in believer's baptism for adults, but also believe in baptizing infants as a sign of the covenant just as Israel circumcised their children. Calvin believed that a person could receive the sign before or after faith.

Both circumcision and water baptism are signs (of covenants).

Abraham believed and was circumcised. Isaac was circumcised as a baby and then believed; that is, we have in the Old Testament and example of the OT sign of circumcision administered after one believed, and we have the majority of the nation applying the sign of the covenant (circumcision) shortly after birth. Furthermore, applying this sign to babies was so important that God sought to kill Moses because of his disobedience and neglect of circumcising his sons! Selah! Thus, Paedobaptists reason that it is the duty of Christian parents to apply the sign of baptism (sprinkling) to children of Christian parents. This is a powerful argument!

If a person objects to administering the sign of the covenant before faith, then they have an objection with God; for, God commanded the sign to be administered to babies in the OT community before they came to faith and understanding of His truth.

In conclusion, Paedobaptists reason that just as God commanded the sign of circumcision to be administered to the old covenant community, Christians should administer the sign of the new covenant to infants as a giant illustration that the sign contains the promises of salvation in Christ.

In the rite of circumcision, we have at least one example of the sign of the covenant being administered to children before a child came to faith. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that application of baptism to children before they come to faith is acceptable, approved, and good for the NT community. Calvin declared that "infants cannot be deprived of it (baptism) without open violation of the will of God" (Inst.4, 16, 8).

*"Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason, my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience would be neither right nor safe. God help me. Here I stand, I can do no other." – Luther.*

### **POSSIBLE RESOLUTION**

The Baptist reason that what Christianity needs is not more baptized non-Christian babies, but more parents dedicated to bring up their children in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Rather than baptizing helpless babies, wouldn't the church be further ahead to baptize cognizant parents with the responsibility of rearing their children for Christ?

Secondly, infant baptism could be replaced with a dedication service. Dedicating a baby to the instruction of Christ has far more support than ritualistic infant baptism (1 Samuel 1, 2; Deuteronomy 6:4-6; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:1-4). It is Scriptural to dedicate a child to Biblical instruction, and such a practice deserves solemn liturgical practice, but baptizing infants fogs the mind.

In conclusion, from a Baptist perspective the practice of infant baptism does not arise from exegesis, but eisegesis and clear reasoning. It is a deduction based on arguments of silence rather than inductions based on textual observations. Paedobaptists would do well to apply the principle of "sola scriptura" and eliminate the "commandments of men" from their church praxis. By stressing continuity and ignoring discontinuity, paedobaptists commit a fatal hermeneutical error. Such errors will cause others to embrace



a spiritual deception among those who profess Christ. Though this work was not a defense of the Baptist doctrine on baptism, Christian baptism (baptism after a confession of faith) is beyond dispute even among paedobaptists. Paedobaptism, however, relies upon on a manufactured theology that cannot be supported by strict exegesis of Scripture. The consequence of infant baptism is a church composed of baptized unbelievers who may be relying on their infant baptism for saving power.

The Paedobaptists reason that just as God held his people to circumcise their sons shortly after birth, God holds Christians responsible to apply the NT sign of the covenant to children of Christian parents, and to baptize adults who come to faith upon believing the gospel. It is a powerful argument.

In closing, I was witnessing to a college student years ago. I explained the gospel to him and he was absolutely delighted with the message. After a couple of talks, he appeared eager to pursue the gospel. He asked me, “what do I do next?” I told him he should accept Christ and then surrender to Christian baptism. He wanted to discuss this with his pastor. The next day his Methodist pastor called me and chastened me for “converting” his student: “That boy was baptized as infant,” he stated. “And, he don’t need convertin’.” Apparently, the pastor hauled this student into his study and did everything in his power to unconvert him and to convince him that he became a genuine Christian the day his parents baptized him. I never saw the young man again. Unfortunately this is typical scenario among baptized non-Christians. *Infant baptism does not clarify; it sometimes confuses.* Christian baptism is not perfect either, but at least it is based on exegesis considering “repentance and faith” -- a praxis established in the Book of Acts.

## **77. THE CALL TO A CONTINGENCY AROUND CHRIST**

*Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

*1 John 5:21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*

Without a doubt, God seeks to develop men with Christ-centered hearts; that is, men with Christ as their contingency.

The word “*contingency*” implies that principle upon which men organize their life purpose, their meaning of life, and their law-order.

John warns believers about idols; that is, developing a contingency around something other than the LORD God. Sin consist of placing a high value on something that in effect replaces God as the Hub in the middle of a man’s life A man with a contingency around sports, or pornography, or sex, or power, or ease, or a job, or money, or even his own children commits idolatry.

Religion is about a man’s ultimate values. To declare as modern man does that only theists are religious is to narrowly redefine “religion” for a political purpose. All men are religious, because all men have a contingency upon which they derive meaning for their existence. Even atheists are religious because they

organize their lives around some ultimate value. And, if in political office, atheists will legislate laws to protect to protect those values and to remake society based on their contingency. His salvation depends on it.

Paul is saying that due to his conversion and his identification with Christ he entered into a new contingency upon which his new life was organized. Formerly, all vitality revolved around his “ego” and his perceptions of what the world should be. But, when apprehended by the risen Christ, a new reality entered his personal world—the authenticity of the living, resurrected Christ.

The old gestalt was crucified with Christ; that is, at his conversion he was identified with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord. The world of Paul was no longer organized around his “ego,” but around God’s Son. He was conscious of his ego, but not regulated by it. He is not saying that Christ as a Divine Person lived in him. Christ as a Divine Person sits at the right hand of God. Rather, he is saying that he felt the fire of resurrection life burning within him, and the requisite to arrange his precious “all” around the purposes of his new Commander, the Son of God.

He credited his new gestalt to the love of Christ and his sacrifice for him. No longer was he galvanized by his ego, but by the fact that he was the object of God’s love.

Paul said, *“I now live by faith.”* Most translators translate this section “I live by faith in the Son of God.” But, the Greek ablative addresses the source and would be better translated “I live because of His faithfulness.” Because Christ was faithful to God’s Law-word, He qualified Himself to be the Savior. While Paul’s old “ego” struggled to create his own works-based righteousness, Paul discovered in the gospel a righteousness that came from Another; that is, Paul realized he was delivered from God’s curse hanging over sinners, not because he was good, but because Christ was good. His new contingency was built on the life of Christ which made him acceptable in the Beloved. All meaning and purpose now revolved around the living Savior . . . and this is what God desires in every man.

## 78. THE CALL TO RECKON

*Romans 6:11* “*Reckon yourself dead to sin and alive to God. . .*”

### IMPORTANCE

It has been said that when a believer puts his trust in Christ, he inherits over thirty-two blessings. Just as tourist must quickly assimilate information about the country in which he is touring, the believer must quickly assimilate truth regarding his domicile in Christ. The first set of commands in the book of Romans begin in Romans 6:11. Understanding these commands are necessary in order that the believer may grow in his new position in Christ. Obeying this command is paramount for victory over sin, for joy, and for fellowship.

The command “*to reckon*” is the first command in Romans. It is preceded three times by the word “*know*” (Romans 6:3, 6, 9).

The first great responsibility of the believer is to know who he is in Christ; and, the second great responsibility is to incorporate these truths in his daily life.

### **SOMETHING TO KNOW**

*Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The believer needs to know that He has inherited many spiritual benefits in Christ: peace, joy, hope of the glory of God, the Holy Spirit, life, justification and reconciliation (Romans 5:1ff).

***Romans 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?***

He needs to know that he has been “*baptized*” into Christ, that is, he has a new gestalt because he has been ***placed into*** the life and history of Christ with all its power (Romans 6:4). He is now co-joined to Christ and His marvelous history. Each believer is ***transferred out*** of Adam’s family line and ***placed into*** Christ. What is true of Christ is true of the believer. This *placing into* (baptism) the life of Christ is ***not*** water baptism, but a positional truth – a change in status and citizenship. It is like receiving a credit card. No immediate change occurs, but with possession of the card, one has a whole new set of powers.

***Romans 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.***

The believer needs to know that he *is set free from sin* and no longer has to obey sin’s demands. “His *old man*” (what he was in Adam) was crucified with Christ; that is, all that he was in Adam as a sinner came to an end. The “*old man*” is what a believer was in Adam before he came to know Christ. Like a flashback regarding his early childhood, the believer’s old childhood no longer exist. He has a new gestalt. **The old gestalt** was retired. “The old man” is not the “flesh” (sarx), the “principle of sin,” or the “sinful nature.” ***It is the believer’s unregenerate connection with Adam’s race.***

***2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.***

The believer needs to know that he is a “*new creation*” with a righteous nature (2 Corinthians 5:17). It is no longer normal to sin. The new believer is considered a *saint*, “a holy one,” “a child of God,” a member of the “priesthood.” As a “*new creature*,” it is normal to want to do what is right (1 Thessalonians 4:1). Deep down inside at the core of his being the believer is a righteous, regenerated person who seeks to please God. The new believer may not yet know what pleases the Father, but he wants to honor Him. He may not yet have formed new habits, but he does desire to do the right thing.

The new believer needs to know that victory over sin is *not only possible but also probable*. He has been regenerated. Though there is a part of him that is not regenerated (the body of sin), the inner man has been born again. The man has a new gestalt<sup>73</sup>. Yes, there is conflict between the old way of life and God’s new

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<sup>73</sup> Gestalt refers to a man’s operating principles in the inner man; that is, his self-organizing tendencies; his mode of operandi; his complex interactions to events and emotion in his life. The old gestalt is the man without Christ; the new gestalt is the

creation, but the new man is separated from the old man through his identification with Christ. He is now under a more powerful influence, the life of Christ implanted in him through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:1-14). The believer is born again in his spirit, and that part of him is more powerful than his unregenerated body with all its capacity for evil.

In **Galatians 5: 16ff**, Paul calls this unregenerated part of man “*the flesh*” (*the sarx*). The “*flesh*” represents more than the human body, but includes all unredeemed parts of man: memory, thoughts, desires, and the unregenerate body. The *sarx* is the old gestalt. Specifically, the *sarx* in Galatians is synonymous with the unsaved, unregenerate Jew (The *Ishmael/sarx*) who persecutes Abraham’s true children of faith (Spirit). What was happening historically between the *Judaizers (sarx)* and the Christians (Spirit) is reflected in the believer’s existential struggle between his regenerated being (the Spirit) and his unregenerated members (*sarx*). The macro-struggle between the pagans and the Christians is also mirrored as a micro-struggle in the individual Christian between his regenerate parts (Spirit) and his unregenerate members (*sarx*).

***Romans 6:9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him .***

The new believer needs to know that he is linked with Christ in such a way that Christ’s history is now his history . . . his inheritance . . . and his destiny. He shares the benefits of the victory of Christ. He is the beneficiary of the **Settlor**; i.e. the believer inherits the wealth of Christ. What is true of Christ is also true of him. Like a fan in the stadium that rejoices over the win of his home team and considers it his victory, the believer needs to consider the conquest of Christ as his triumph.

***Romans 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.***

**This is the first command in the Book of Romans**, and the one least obeyed. It is a **mental action**. Identification with the glorious Christ demands a change in thinking. Just as an adopted orphan must change his thinking regarding his new family position, the believer must begin to do some accounting of his own. He is alive to God (in relationship with God), and he needs to think like one who has a relationship to God. He is dead to sin, but he needs to think like one who is dead to sin. In other words, *his thinking needs to catch up to his new standing in Christ*.

***Romans 6:12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.***

The believer can now resist sin. Because he is united with Christ, regenerated, and has a righteous nature, he will wage war against sin. Resisting sin is possible. Victory is probable. But, he needs to activate and strengthen his will to stand up to that which once dominated him. The believer needs to assert himself and refuse to be bullied by sinful desires.

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regenerated powers at work in the inner man causing him to see and respond to life differently. The new birth is not merely a new lease on life but the life and power of the Holy Spirit at work through God’s seed planted in the inner man.

***Romans 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.***

The Levitical law told a man what was right, but it did **not** empower the man to do what was right. It told a man how to behave, but it did **not** supply the ability to do what was right. It mediated between the sinful Israelite and YHWH, but the Levitical system did **not** regenerate men. When he did wrong, the law condemned him for disobedience. The law also provided a means for the sinning Israelite to be restored to His God. But, Levitical mediation did **not** supply the power of obedience just because of its existence. Thus, the weakness of the system!

But, the Christian is **not** under the Levitical system. Sin **cannot** have ultimate victory over the Christian because he is **not** under the powerlessness of the old mediatorial system, but under the power and resources of grace. Under grace, the believer is united with Christ, justified by faith, and regenerated by the Spirit who gives him power over sin. *Grace removes the impediments and supplies the resources necessary for the believer to obtain victory over sin.*

### **THE BELIEVER'S RESPONSE TO GRACE**

- He should start thinking like a man united with Christ and alive to God (6:9).
- He should stop thinking like he is a sinner in Adam, and start thinking like a child of God.
- He should think like a man delivered from sin (6:1, 2, 9).
- He should stop thinking that he is enslaved to sin.
- He should take control of his body (his unredeemed members) and his mind and resist sin (6:11-13).
- He should take his body and put it to good use serving just and righteous causes (6:13; 12:1-2).
- He should live out a life of thankfulness as a voluntary slave of righteousness because it is consistent with his new nature and because it is consistent with grace (6:14).
- He should rely on the Spirit of God and his new resources in grace (Galatians 5:16-22).
- He should learn to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5); that is, to realize that He has been reprogrammed by virtue of his union with the Savior. He needs to turn on his new internal computer and let it run.

## **79. THE CALL TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT**

***Ephesians 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;***

### **THE NEED TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT**

We live in a sensual, emotional, passionate society controlled by a demonic despot. Like a black hole that sucks in rays of light, the devilish cosmos has a gravitational force that pulls all towards the epicenter of its lusts. We live among carnal men whose fleshly responses stirs up passions within us. And most

difficult of all, we live in unregenerated bodies with unredeemed parts grounded in the Adamic nature. It is little wonder there is so much deviance, divorce, and division among us. What is needed is people who know experientially what it is like to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

### **THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT**

The Old Testament testified of the dawning of a new age among men where God's Spirit would be poured forth to regenerate the earth, to regenerate the heart of man, to unite men to God, and to take up residence in the heart of the righteous. The message of the Spirit was a New Day (Psalm 96, 98; Isaiah 11), a New Man (Ezekiel 36:27), a New Creation (Isaiah 32:14, 15), and a New King (Isaiah 61:1ff; Isaiah 59:21). The OT saints never tasted the powers of the age to come. They saw it at a distance (1 Peter 1:10-12).

The New Testament period opens with the Spirit descending upon the Son. The Spirit began a new work in and through Israel's Messiah. The Messianic Age came upon the nation of Israel in a wonderful and yet limited way to defeat man's enemies and to bring men under the blessings of the kingdom of God. Jesus promised the Spirit to His disciples at the Last Supper (John 15:26; 16:13). The ultimate blessing of the Eschaton was given to men at Pentecost and the Christian age was born. Moreover, the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. The zeal of the Lord will accomplish this.

### **DEFINITION OF BEING FILLED**

***Ephesians 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.***

The word "*filled*" is the Greek word *pleroo* (plhrou/sqe). It is translated "fulfill" (51x), "fill" (19x), "be full" (7x), and "complete" (2x), "end" (2x), and misc. terms (9x).

The word "fill" means "to make full," "to fill up;" i.e. "to fill to the brim;" "to cause to abound," "to furnish" or "supply liberally." In Christian thought, "***being filled with the Spirit is equivalent for being controlled by the character of the Spirit—operating under the power of the regenerated man; the new man; the new creation; and, under the new gestalt.***"

Being filled with the Spirit is not the same as the "baptism of the Spirit." It is not "being slain in the Spirit." It is not being overwhelmed by a spiritual influence. It is not being unreasonable. It is not losing control of one's senses. It is not speaking in tongues. It is not an ecstatic, sensual, emotional experience. God's seed is within him (1 John 3:9). The man Spirit-filled man operates by his new gestalt programmed with the Word of God. For this reason the filling of the Spirit in Ephesians is the same as being filled with the Word of God in Colossians 3:14-16!

### **FACTS ABOUT FILLING**

The word "filled" is the Greek word *plhrou/sqe*. It is a present passive **imperative** and can be translated, "Be being constantly filled." *The present tense demands durative action.* When a man believes, the Spirit enters the man to create a *new man*. The seed of God is implanted, and new life works in the inner man. The Spirit-filled man looks to the Word of God as his moral compass and he relies on God's power to live that life.

It is contrasted with "*not being drunk with wine.*" "*Being filled*" with the Spirit stands in juxtaposition to being under the influence of wine. But unlike a drunken man, the Spirit supplies the Christian with *self-*

*control* (Galatians 5:22-23). There is nothing debilitating, indiscreet, or foolhardy when the Holy Spirit has the reins in a Christian's life.

The verb "*being filled*" is in the *passive* voice and indicates the Spirit is the One seeking to influence the believer; and that Christian must not resist the sanctifying work of the Spirit. In other words, let the Spirit have His way.

The verb "*being filled*" is in the *imperative mood*; i.e. "being filled" is a command that demands obedience on the part of a Christian. The "*filling*" is not just a sovereign act of God that overwhelms a person. It involves the man's cooperation. Being filled takes a decision, an act of the will on the part of the believer seeking sanctification.

There is *one baptism of the Spirit* (1 Corinthians 12:13), but there can be *many fillings of the Spirit*. Filling is never complete, never perfected, and never fully achieved. We can always be more filled with Holy Spirit. Part of the Christian is not born again; that is, the body is not regenerated. Therefore, the Christian must command his body and surrender it as a vessel of service (Romans 12:1). There is tension between the old and the new. There are attitudes to adjust, values to reinforce, habits to change. All this takes time.

The **opposite** of being filled with the Spirit is to be filled with fear or anger or lust or frustration (2 Timothy 1:7; Ephesians 4:27-30).

Being filled with the Spirit is synonymous with being led by the Word of God. The Spirit will do nothing contrary to the Word (Colossians 3:16). Thus, the Spirit-filled Christian is a Bible man.

### **THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT V. THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT**

**The baptism of the Spirit** is the action of the Spirit whereby he takes a new believer of Adam's ménage and places him into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). It is a non-experiential, one-time transaction that occurs at the moment of conversion wherein the Spirit takes the new believer and identifies him with Christ. It is a universal truth applicable to all Christians regardless of their denominational association or disposition.

*The filling of the Spirit, however, is quite subjective.* It involves the cooperation of the human will with the will of the Spirit—a will devoted to the will of God. The filling is *experiential*; that is, it involves daily reliance upon the energies of the new creation. The filling of the Spirit is not a universal experience, and is highly contingent on the hunger of the individual Christian to be in the will of God.

### **PRINCIPLES INVOLVED IN BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT**

There is **no formula** to be filled with the Spirit. Following "steps" is mechanical and superficial. But, a person can put themselves in the way of blessing. Consider the following:

- **Know God's will** (Romans 6:6; Colossians 1:9): Knowledge of God's will as recorded in the Bible will help the believer to not struggle with the Spirit who prompts him to obey His Word.
- **Judge and resist sin** (Romans 6:9ff; 8:13; Colossians 2:4-6): The Spirit is called "the Holy Spirit" and leads Christian men to judge all that is contrary to the character of God in their lives. The Spirit and water is connected in Ezekiel 36:24-26 indicating the dual action of the Spirit which is cleansing

and regeneration. Note the adjurements: “Quench not the Spirit;” and, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.” The term “quench” means “to extinguish” or “put out the fire.” The word “grieve” means “to cause sadness.” Christians quench the Spirit when they say “No” to obeying the Word of God; and, believers grieve the Spirit when they say “Yes” to sin and disobey His Law-word (1 Thessalonians 5:19; Ephesians 4:30).

- **Yield to God and His will** (Romans 6:13; Romans 12:1-2). When the Spirit forbids us to offer our members as instrument of unrighteousness and to present our members to God, He makes a demand on the human will. There is something about exercising the will that is requisite to the filling of the Spirit. The Christian must want the joy of being in His will more than he wants to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.
- **Stay under trials and obey in times of testing** (John 14:21). Being filled with the Spirit does not mean the Christian will be free of trials. If the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness for a time of testing, He will lead Christians into times of testing.
- **Rely upon grace** (Romans 6:14). Christian living is not empowered by law (anarthrous noun) or the principles of reward and punishment. He is empowered by the provisions of a grace-based relationship. Being under a legal system refers to one’s effort to merit God’s favor; but, grace bestows God’s unmerited favor upon all who believe before they are called to obey His commands. The Christian, however, is never without duty to God’s law. *Grace provides the Christian with spiritual resources to keep His commandments — **not** to gain His favor, but because they already enjoy His favor.* In other words, live responsibly while expecting God to graciously provide what is needed as you face the demands of life. When you access the benefits of grace “*sin shall not have dominion over you.*”

### **MANIFESTATIONS OF BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT**

- **Fellowship:** “*Speaking to yourselves in Psalm and hymns . . .*” (Ephesians 5:19). The Spirit will lead us to sing and to rejoice in our Lord.
- **Boldness in witnessing** (Acts 4:31): When a man is filled with the Spirit, he will have freedom to speak the gospel and stand on principles of righteousness in his witness for Christ; that is, he will not be governed by fear or timidity.
- **Character under trial** (Colossians 1:11): Trials are distressing and demanding. They expose men’s frailties and flaws. It is under trial that Christians need to be Spirit-filled in order to exercise virtue.

### **THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT**

***Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.***

The fruits of the Spirit are a description of Christ-like character. Being filled with the Spirit means to manifest His character in the manifold circumstances of the Christian life. The fruits of the Spirit are marks of the *Eschaton*. The *Eschaton* is the age to come and in the age to come there will be joy and peace in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). Thus, we pray, “*Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done,*” now, in my time, at this moment of my life.”



The fruits are **not** the same as gifts. Gifts are abilities. Fruits are reflections of Christian character.

- **love** (*agape*); Affection without criticism or self-interest
- **joy** (*chara*); delight in God's will in every circumstance.
- **peace** (*eirene*); calm serenity that unites people to the will of God.
- **longsuffering** (*makrothumia*); the ability to restrain one emotions and tongue under stress.
- **gentleness** (*chrestotes*); careful management of other people's flaws.
- **goodness** (*agathosune*); demonstrating excellence in Christian character.
- **faithfulness** (*pistis*); believing God and being faithful to commitments in a busy schedule.
- **meekness** (*prautes*); humility and self-restraint; i.e. power under control.
- **temperance** (*egkrateia*); mastery of one's mind, emotions, bodily appetites.

These fruits are listed from the last to the first. The **first** fruit of the Spirit is *temperance*. Without *self-control* one cannot produce the other fruits. The golden fruit is love.

### **WALKING IN THE SPIRIT**

***Galatians 5:25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.***

The “*if*” plus the indicative leads us into a first class conditional clause meaning that the condition is true, that is, the *protasis* admits all Christians live by the Spirit. “*Let us walk in the Spirit*” (*the apodasis*) contains the present subjunctive (*stoicw/men*). The present subjunctive indicates several truths:

(a) that not all Christians walk by the Spirit,

(b) that walking in the Spirit is a possible, and

(c) that Christians should take immediate action to walk by the power of the Spirit. The verbal in this sentence can be translated, “*Let us keep on keeping in step with the Spirit.*” We could translate the text this way: “*Since we all live in the Spirit, let us walk by the Spirit.*”

Positively, every believer can learn to walk in the Spirit by grasping five relationships:

#### **His relationship to the Spirit:**

The Holy Spirit is a Person with whom all Christians have a relationship because their bodies are a temple of God. The Holy Spirit imparts life (Galatians 5:25; John 3:5), and life involves a relationship with God.

All Christians have the Spirit, but walking in the Spirit is something that needs to be cultivated on a daily basis. Walking by the Spirit is the result of obedience.

Walking in the Spirit means “*to keep in step with the Spirit.*” That is, to consciously submit our minds, emotions, and body to the will of God. Walking in the Spirit is like following the conductor in a Marching

band. By listening to the Word of God and watching the Conductor, Christians will be in step with the music and hopefully in sync with other members of the body.

### His relationship to the Torah

The believer is “**not** under the law” (Romans 6:14). Paul is informing the believers at Rome that it is possible to live righteously and not be a continual slave to sin. The future is in view. Two **systems** of living are contrasted: **law and grace**. The phrase “the law” should be translated “law” without the article. There is no definite article in the Greek. The anarthrous noun refers to **the principal of law** -- a **system** of law as a means to merit salvation – like Judaism. Paul is **not** contrasting Torah to grace, but a *performance-based theology* versus *grace-based theology*. The opposite of God’s moral law is **not** *grace*, but *lawlessness*; the opposite of grace is not law, but *licentiousness*.

Paul may well have in mind Levitical law as a mediatorial system to God and Rabbanical case law known as Judaism. The Levitical system was a shadow of Christ’s work at the cross. It was Israel’s tutor to lead them to Christ. Moreover, as time progressed the Jews developed a series of rabbinical rulings called “Judaism.” In Galatians, Paul pitted the gospel against *Judaism*, **not** the gospel against the *Ten Commandments*.

When it comes to godly living the believer is **not** under *the principle of law* as a means of salvation nor is he abandoned to the demands of holiness having only his own meager fleshly resources to keep God’s moral commands. Under grace, God not only accepts believers, He provides spiritual resources to help them live righteously . . . to keep God’s moral law. The text does **not** mean that Christians are not under law generally. He is not saying the Ten Commandments do not have a place in Christian thinking. God forbid! All Christians are subject to the laws of “nature” and all have a duty to God’s moral law. Further, they have the power to keep God’s moral law by virtue of *regeneration*.

Further, the Jewish believer is said to be “*dead to the law*” (Romans 7:6-9) which implies the following:

In Christ, the Jew is *no longer under a system of rewards and punishments* for salvation. He is no longer in Adam without resources for godly living. The believing Jew is re-created in Christ with a powerful capacity to keep God’s moral law. Because he is born-again and has the power of God’s seed operating within him, he can now keep the Ten Commandments. Furthermore, in Christ, the believing Jew is released from former duties connected to Jewish traditions, legends, and folklore. He is no longer obligated to obey *Israel’s cultic laws* and the *rabbinical traditions* choking the system. He is free!! And, he is accepted because He has embraced the Son. And, he must stand in that freedom and not be lured back under the cultic laws of Israel by zealous Judaizers; *that is, he has been delivered from Rabbinical Judaism* but not law as a guide for moral living (Galatians 5:1-2). There are few things more derelict than the notion that Christians are at liberty what law they will serve. All are bound to live by God’s law as expressed in the New and Old Testaments.

The Ten Commandments are an expression of righteousness, but they are not the highest expression of righteousness. What the Torah was to the Jew, Christ is to the believer. Jesus is the Living Torah -- the highest standard of righteousness known to man. The Spirit’s goal is to lead us to Christ who is the *perfect, subjective* representation of God’s law. The law told a man what was right and wrong, but it did not empower him to do what was right or prevent him from doing wrong. The mind of the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law (Romans 8:7). But, in grace, the Spirit empowers the believer to do what is right.

When Paul says we are “*not under law*,” he means that the Christian is not left to his own meager resources “weakened by the flesh” to obey God’s Law-word (Romans 8:3). In Christ, the “I” or “the ego” has been released from the power of sin. The law of the Spirit sets him free from the law of sin and death *so that the Law might be fulfilled in the believer* (Romans 8:4). He has the power of the Spirit to obey the Ten Commandments not to be accepted, but because “there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ” (Romans 8:1).

Obedience to the Ten Commandments is something the believer is required to do not to earn favor, but because he is already a member of God’s family and under household rules. The (Jewish) believer is dead to the ceremonial aspects of the law and no longer has a responsibility to them. But, he has every responsibility to Christ, who is the living Torah, the perfect, subjective representation of the character of God, and he has a duty to the objective standard of righteousness as expressed in the Ten Commandments. Obedience to God’s Law-order is the means of loving God and loving his neighbor (1 John 5:2; Romans 13:8).

### **His relationship to the flesh:**

***Galatians 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.***

**First**, all believers are *in the Spirit*, but not all believers are *spiritually minded*. Carnality has wrongly been identified with common phrases such as “the flesh” or “old nature.” “*The flesh*” (*sarx*) has several uses in the NT. First, the *sarx* refers to unregenerate man. It does not refer to a sinful nature. The NIV translation of *sarx* as the “sinful nature” in Romans 8 was a flawed theological decision, not a linguistic one. All non-believers are in the *sarx*, and all believers are in the *pneuma*. **The spirit-sarx conflict** is the tension between *unregenerate* man and *regenerate* man; **not** between a new nature and old nature (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3).

**Second**, what is true historically is also true regarding the individual’s personal gestalt. Paul uses the historical struggle between the legalists (Judaizers) and the Christians in Galatians to instruct the believer about his own individual struggle against sins. The *sarx* (unregenerate man) also refers to the unredeemed part of the Christian man; his unregenerate members, that which is still subject to sin’s enticements. At one time, in his non-Christian days, living for the flesh was the prime ambition of a man. But, no longer! The Christian has new life in the Spirit. His relationship to the sin changed when He was born-again.

*All believers have the Spirit and possess the Spirit of life.* All believers are “*born again*.” All believers are united to Christ and it is impossible to live in sin (Romans 6:2). In their inner core, they want to please their heavenly Father. But, there is a part of the Christian man, which is still unredeemed and still prone to sin which can appropriately be called “*the sarx*” or “the body.” These parts are in conflict; that is, the unregenerate part of man is in conflict with the regenerate part of the Christian.

The believer has crucified the flesh; that is, he has rejected sin’s rule over him (Galatians 6:14). Just as crucifixion was the ultimate rejection of men toward another man, the believer has ultimately rejected sin as a ruling principle over him. Therefore, when a Christian yield’s to sin’s bidding, he lives **inconsistent** with who he is, with what God has made him to be, and with his true nature -- a righteous nature. While it is *natural* for a non-Christian to sin, it is *unnatural* for a Christian to sin (Romans 6:2-6).

The body, the unredeemed part of man, is still with the believer and it has urges and passions contrary to the will of God.. But, the unredeemed body need not dominate the Christian man because the Spirit has regenerated the believer. His true essence is pro-righteousness and anti-sin.

**His relationship with the world:**

***Galatians 6:14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.***

The *world* is man's system of *values*: its worship of pleasures, accomplishments, and material possessions. The world is man's government, laws, and lords—man-made, humanistic systems opposed to God's Law-source. The world is *crucified* unto the believer; that is, as the world rejected Christ and crucified Him, **the Christian has rejected the world and ordered its death**—a metaphor of crucifixion. The believer has declared war on the world and is hostile to its factories of shameless carnality. Crucifixion is a symbol of rejection, of scorn, of contempt. In its place is love and embrace of the cross . . . the believer's only means of boasting.

**His relationship with believers:**

***Galatians 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another .***

The Christian life is a relationship with God and with God's people. One cannot divorce his relationship with people from his relationship with God. To love God is to love His people, and to love His people is to love Him. Love is the ultimate of Christian maturity. It demands trusting as well as being trustworthy. It demands doing what is right as well as rejecting what is wrong. When we love, we use freedom appropriately. When we love, we fulfill God's law (Romans 13:8).

Negatively: To walk in the Spirit not only involves understanding what the Spirit is *for*, but understanding what He is *against*.

***The Spirit will not lead us to exploit the flesh:*** The Spirit exists in juxtaposition to the flesh; “. . . the Spirit lusteth against the flesh . . .,” that is, the Spirit has opposite desires of the *sarx*. The Spirit is headed in a different direction than the flesh, and has different interests than the flesh. The believer, like a rope in a tug-of-war contest, will be pulled in two directions. The test of new life is tension. The tension, however, is not one between two natures, but a tension between a redeemed soul and an unregenerated body and all that it entails.

***The Spirit will not lead us by fear of punishment:*** The Spirit exists in juxtaposition to the law: that is, the Spirit is not against the morals of God's law, but He is against law (a system of rewards and punishments based on the merits and energy of the man) as a ruling principle. Furthermore, the Spirit does what the law could not do. He imparts life and He imparts power to live righteously (Romans 8:1-4; 1 John 4:17).

***The Spirit will not lead us to harm God's people.*** When the flesh is active, people bite and devour one another with razor sharp tongues (Galatians 5:15). Rather, He will lead Christians to take the high road -- the course of love with patience and righteousness. God loves us because of who He is, a God of love. Likewise, Christians love because of who they are, people with the love of God burning away in their hearts (1 John 4:7-16).

God wants his people to walk in the Spirit, but first they must understand their union with Christ, and that their relationship to the law, to the flesh, and to the world has changed.

## 80. THE CALL TO FORGIVE

The Lord taught us to forgive those who hurt us and to pray for them:

***Matthew 6:12 “forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors***

The word “*forgive*” (*apheimi*) means to send away, to divorce, and too cancel a debt.

We have been graciously forgiven, and our Lord calls us to graciously forgive. But, if you have ever been seriously hurt by someone you trusted, you know how difficult it is to forgive. It is not easy trying to straighten out all the knots and tangles of a broken relationship. Sins are rarely excusable, always unacceptable, and sometimes forgivable.

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FORGIVE

The first time the word “*forgive*” is used in Scripture is in the story of Joseph when his jealous brothers pleaded with him to forgive them (Genesis 50:17). They hurt him deeply. When he was in a position of power over them, they begged him for a cancellation of their debt. Amazingly, Joseph was not only able to forgive, his spirituality enabled him to be an instrument of healing to the entire family. Joseph was not like a puddle on a sidewalk, his character had deep roots. He saw in his pain and suffering the hand of God.

*Genesis 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

The Hebrew word “*forgive*” (*afn, nasa*) means “to carry” or “to lift away.” The Scripture speaks of a nursing father *carrying* (*nasa*) his helpless infant (Numbers 11:12). Haggai mentions a working priest *carrying* (*nasa*) a carcass in his robe (Haggai 2:12). He also brings before us an image of an olive tree *carrying* (*nasa*) its heavy fruit on overburdened limbs (2:19). Zechariah had a vision of an iron lid weighing about 100 pounds being lifted off (*nasa*) a large eastern clay pot. All of these images suggest that the forgiver should take the weight of guilt off penitents and carry it on his own shoulders. And, this is what the Lord Jesus did at Calvary. *He took our sins on his own shoulders so the weight of our guilt might be lifted from us. Joseph’s brothers were asking Joseph to take the weight of their sin against him off of them and to carry it himself.* And, he did!

Because forgiveness is expensive, it is not easy to forgive.

### THE HIGH COST OF FORGIVENESS

**§ Forgiveness is expensive because the forgiver has to give up his anger.** It is so easy to feed the fires of anger with dead wood from the storage bin of past memories. To forgive means *the forgiver must let go of his angry emotions* and not direct them at the one who hurt him.

**\$ Forgiveness is expensive because the forgiver must let go of his pain.** When one is sinned against, anger, fear, distrust, loneliness, bewilderment flood the soul. Forgiveness means the forgiver must not only forgive the act *but the pain it caused!*

**\$ Forgiveness is expensive because the forgiver must give up his sense of justice.** When the scales of justice are tilted against a man, he has a built in gyroscope that seeks to balance the scales in his favor. Revenge is so sweet. Forgiveness means that forgiver has to leave the courtroom of justice and go to the hospital of grace so the guilty can be healed. Letting go of justice is so hard!!

**\$ Forgiveness is expensive because the forgiver must give up control over his debtor.** When a man is a creditor, he wants *to control the debtor* through contracts and threats of foreclosure. Hurt people seek to control those who injure them by lectures, by anger, by constant reminders that the debt is due. *Hurt people will seek to extract duties and obligations from the offender.* Forgiveness is expensive because the forgiver has to give up a “*you owe me*” attitude—to give up the angry words that he uses to control the one who has hurt him. This is so difficult because forgiveness involves setting the debtor free. And, this is risky because he might do the same thing again and again.

**\$ Forgiveness is expensive because the forgiver must give up his pride.** Often we listen to the horror stories on the evening news with numb hearts. But, when injury comes to us personally, all our passions are aroused. When it is ME that has been hurt, self-importance is thrust to the forefront of our consciousness. *Our pain screams for relief. Forgiveness means GOD is at the center of the universe and not wounded ME!* Forgiveness means the ME in me must take his proper place before the LORD and in simple obedience to “*forgive my debtors.*”

### **THE HIGH COST OF UNFORGIVENESS**

While forgiveness is expensive, no one can afford the HIGHER COST OF UNFORGIVENESS!

***Matthew 6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.***

Jesus declared that if we do not forgive people (repentant people) of their trespasses, that God will not forgive us. Without His forgiveness there is no fellowship with Him, no power, no answered prayer, no peace, no rest, and no relief. The lions of revenge can devour a soul. And what believer can afford to feed these felines roaring for a taste of blood?

### **ERRONEOUS IDEAS ABOUT FORGIVENESS**

**We are supposed to forgive everybody.** By listening to preachers today, you might get the idea that Christians are obligated to forgive everybody all the time, every day, and twice on Sundays. But, God is not calling us to exercise universal forgiveness. Contrary, to what many teach, the Christian is not called “*to forgive*” the whole world. This is arrogance and a gross misunderstanding of the Scripture. He has not given Christians the responsibility to forgive all criminals and terrorists any more than he has given us the individual responsibility of punishing them. Rather, *the Christian is called to stand ready to forgive those individuals (friends, family, and neighbors) who sin against him personally* (Matthew 6:12).

**We are supposed to forgive immediately.** We should be ready to forgive because Christ has forgiven us. But, *this view of requisite instant-forgiveness* is flawed in that it fails to embrace the immense need of the offender—a need to fully identify his sin and to completely repent of it. The false belief that forgiveness

must be rendered immediately by the offended *fails to recognize the seriousness of offenses and the proper process of repentance*. We do not need more ostrich-like Christians that put their head in the sand and avoid confronting evil at work in people around us. *Glossing over crimes and betrayals of trust is not what forgiveness is all about*. **Plastic forgiveness is not** what impenitent souls need. **Quickie-forgiveness** creates a culture of victimization and feeds the predatory instincts of miscreants. Yes, Joseph forgave his brothers but only after a long, long season of heart-wrenching conflict and soul-searching on the part of his brothers (Genesis 42-45).

**We are supposed to forgive miscreants when they say, “I’m sorry.”** Sinners often give a cursory acknowledgment of their wrongdoing without giving careful consideration to the depth and breathe of the pain they caused. “I’m sorry” is not a confession. “I’m sorry” is not repentance. “I’m sorry” doesn’t reflect careful thought about the miscreant’s sins. “I’m sorry” has the self-centered miscreant focused on his pathetic feelings instead of the deep pain he caused to the offended. “I’m sorry” is only a penny payment on a thousand dollar debt. Forgiveness is based on restitution, and where restitution is required, “I’m sorry” is not going to make the injured whole. Quickie forgiveness is like a band aid on a bullet wound. It doesn’t stop the bleeding. Rather, we wish to hear, “I was wrong! I’m at fault! Will you forgive me? How can I make up for my wrongdoing? How can I make you whole?”

**We are supposed to forgive people unconditionally.** Unconditional forgiveness is not a Scriptural concept. God’s love is so deep and wide we often call it “unconditional love.” But, even God’s love is not unconditional. Forgiveness is based on the death of Christ (Isaiah 55:6-7; Romans 5:6-8). Further, His forgiveness must be received. Even in human relationships, God places a condition upon forgiveness. The Christian is not called to automatically forgive people when he is sinned against. The offender must repent in order to be forgiven. Likewise, the believer is only called to forgive repentant men seeking forgiveness (Luke 17:3). Forgiveness is no more unconditional than expecting our employer to pay us a monthly salary regardless of our performance.

***Luke 17:3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.***

The “*If*” clause is a third class conditional in the Greek. The two subjunctive verbs express the possibility of the action of the verb. It could be translated, “If you brother sins against you, and he may, rebuke him; and if he repents and maybe he will or maybe he will not, but if he does repent, forgive him.” In this case, forgiveness is possible, but not highly probable because forgiveness is based on true repentance and true repentance is rare. It is an extraordinary response for a sinner to come to the one he has offended and say, “*I’m wrong. I want to change!*” But, if this happens, the offended is under duty to forgive.

**We are supposed to forgive and forget.** This is too simplistic. Just as an amputee can’t forget his loss, it is next to impossible to forget bruising, crushing betrayals of trust. God can forget! But, we can’t do so as easily. It takes work for us. When we say, “I forgive you,” we are saying, “You really did hurt me, but you have my commitment to work on not letting your transgression interfere with our future relationship. I will do my best to not hold this against you.” Just as repentance is never perfect, forgiveness is never perfect. It is something we have to engage in a meaningful way to accomplish debt elimination.

**I’m a victim and I can’t forgive.** Our culture has created an environment of victimization where the psychologized feel like their inner child has been wounded emotionally. A church full of victims and no predators fosters the culture of victimization. The truth is there is no wounds without transgressors; there is no prey without predators. Yes, there are wounded people among us, but those same wounded people

are often vicious predators who spread their misery and bitterness among family members. People who have “*beams*” in their own eye are not in a position to claim victimization said Jesus (Matthew 7:1ff). Reconciliation will never occur until both parties come clean and confess their irresponsible behavior. Mismanagement of wounds is a sin and multiplies pain in families. People who can’t forgive may be predators who have never owned up to their own sins against others.

### **FORGIVENESS IN FOCUS**

Life is messy. Bruisers and the bruised are among us. Relationships are tied in knots because of violations of trusts and the wounds caused by them. But, the good news is that **grace can undo the effects of sin in families** — in marriages -- if people will activate grace.

Bestowing forgiveness is based upon the repentance of the transgressor. “*If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him.*”

The word “*trespass*” is the Greek word “*harmatano*.” It means to “fall short;” that is, he has committed nonfeasance, a failure to perform a required duty that results in failed expectations or loss of something valuable.

The word “*rebuke*” means “to censure” or “correct.” It is an imperative. God calls us to recognize wrongdoing and to rebuke the source.

The conjunctions “*if*” in this sentence are a third class conditionals with the subjunctive; that is, “maybe he will, maybe he won’t.” Jesus is saying, if your brother repents, and he does repent, then you are to cancel his debt.

The extension of forgiveness *is conditioned upon repentance*. It is a conditional offer: repent, and I will forgive you. Forgiveness, therefore, is only offered to the contrite. We have **no** duty to offer forgiveness to the incorrigible. If the transgressor truly recognizes his wrong doing, and truly seeks our forgiveness, then we have a duty to forgive and do all we can to minister to the need of the transgressor. Guilt is a terrible taskmaster. True forgiveness recognizes the transgressor has the greater need. If he is not confronted, he will continue to spread misery among friends and neighbors. Rebuking a miscreant is God’s way of helping the transgressor grow in integrity, into a person that can be trusted.

Furthermore, Jesus is **not** discussing crime here. Criminal acts, willful injury to person or property, are usually dealt with through the courts. Crimes must be punished for the health of the community. Being indifferent to criminal trespasses is **not** what our Lord is promoting in this passage. Jesus is not discussing criminal acts, but market-place trespasses; He is **not** addressing international terrorism, but relational, neighborly infractions. Criminal acts can also be forgiven, but not until we recognize them for what they are—illegal, criminal, felonious crimes. Our Lord is discussing *common breaches of trust*. These must be confronted so the transgressor can grow into a law-keeper instead of a trust-breaker.

The goal of repentance is **not** to secure quickie forgiveness, *but to make the offended whole again*. We make the people we hurt whole by listening to the pain of the injured; that is, by shutting our mouth and listening to the pain we caused. We make people whole by restitution. If we break our neighbor’s living room window by throwing a baseball into it, we need to replace the window. See Leviticus six.

Jesus is teaching that if God is willing to forgive our mammoth debt against Him, surely we can forgive miniscule debts of our family and friends who hurt us. If God is willing to pay the High Cost of



Forgiveness by sending His only begotten Son into this world as the Sin-Lifter (nasa), surely we can pay the High Cost of Forgiveness and lift-away (nasa) burdens from those who have hurt us and who seek our forgiveness.

Furthermore, we are not in a position to confront anyone with sin until we take the “beam” out of own eye; that is, we have to clear our conscience before we can be in a position to confront another with their transgressions. Not until we say, “I am wrong. Will you forgive me?” can we be in a position to say, “*Brother, I have ought against thee.*” Clear the conscience; keep short accounts; and, we will be in a position to be like Christ and to heal those who offend us (Matthew 7:1-5).

### **THE DEEPER SIDE OF LOVE**

Family is where we learn about love and forgiveness. The dutiful Christian will find himself going deeper into love and forgiveness. Consider the following relational principles involved in Biblical love. Take marriage for example.

#### **Commitment                      Acceptance**

Love is a commitment to give, and it must be received and accepted to produce happiness. But there is a risk in love, the risk of rejection. Therefore, to love is to be vulnerable. The opposite of love is self-protection—a lack of vulnerability.

#### **Trust                                  Responsibility**

Lovers build a relationship on trust. It is impossible to love without trusting. Love is vulnerable because it trusts another with needs and weaknesses. The one who is trusted is being leaned upon and has the responsibility of protecting that trust. However, the one who trusts is vulnerable and if the person being trusted is weak, they may fail that trust. There is a responsibility in being trusted and there is the danger of violating trusts and wounding others.

#### **Pain                                  Violation of a trust**

Lovers must negotiate with pain or they will never be complete in their love. The greatest lovers receive the greatest amount of pain. Committed people care, and because they care, they are vulnerable to the failures of others. When other people fail, it hurts. The pain you feel is not an indication of your weakness, but a sign of your mates’ immaturity. Pain tells you that you have loved and trusted; that you have followed Christ.

#### **Grace                                  Forgiveness**

When one is wounded, it hurts. When hurt, you must share with your spouse how they hurt you. The healing process begins when hurt is shared and the offender admits his failure, seeks forgiveness, and comes alongside to share in the pain they caused. Confession says, “I agree. I have failed your trust and wounded you. I was wrong. Will you forgive me? How can I help relieve the pain you feel?” Healing can take place when there is confession and effort on the part of the offender to restore the relationship, and where forgiveness and grace are extended by the wounded. Forgiveness says, “I not only forgive your act, but the pain you caused.”

Christ                                  Pain                                  Healing

The greatest lover was Christ: He who loved best was wounded the most. But, through His wounds healing has come to mankind.

Likewise, the supreme goal of the Christian life is to be like Jesus; and, to be like Jesus means we must become a wounded healer. Grace heals. When grace is active, forgiveness is granted.

*"By His wounds are we healed . . ." (Isaiah 53:5).*

## 81. THE CALL TO PRAY

*Luke 18:1 Men ought always to pray and not to faint.*

### THE "OUGHT" OF PRAYER

An acute observer of human behavior, Jesus perceived a fatal flaw in the prayers of God's people. **Men quit too easily.** In prayer, men are fainters, quitters, and resigners.

Pulling his disciples aside, Jesus gave them a powerful lesson on prayer saying, "*Men ought always to pray and not to faint.*"

"*Ought*" makes prayer a necessity; a duty; and, a requisite for walking with God. The adverb "*always*" indicates something occurs at all times, without exception, or continuously.

A little boy was heard praying one night,

*"Dear God, Daddy is still not making enough money for this family. Mother still worries about how we are going to pay the bills. My brother Bob is still not on the first string football team. My sister Beth still does not have a boyfriend. Grandma still has trouble with shingles, and I'm tired of praying for this family."*

Perhaps, like this boy, we have fallen into a state of resignation and discouragement regarding prayer. If so, this lesson is for us.

### ASSURANCES OF ANSWERED PRAYER

We should not give up praying for the following reasons:

**First, Christians ought always to pray because prayer is the primary means of overcoming evil.**

The word for "*faint*" in verse one is the Greek word *evgkakei/n* (*ev kakein*). It is made up of two words, "*en*" which means "to turn inward," and "*kakeo*" which means evil. It can be translated, "*Men ought always to pray, and not to turn in to evil.*" When we stop praying, we let evil reign. When we stop praying, we surrender our lives to the evil one.

All religions and philosophical systems assist people in living with evil or in trying to escape it. The **Greek stoics** criticized Christians because they were unwilling to accept the world as it is. **Buddhism** is not a religion as much as it is a philosophy on how to negotiate with suffering in the world. In

**secularism**, life is an end in itself. It refuses to include God in life's equation. Consequently, the norm is *life as it is* or *the acceptance of wrongdoing as normal*. **Hinduism** seeks to escape suffering by exerting mind over matter; that is, Hinduism does not seek to confront evil but to escape it by rechanneling mental energies. Even among **the Christian community**, prayer is sometimes viewed as wasted energy. When the press asked Paul Tillich, the death-of-God theologian, if he prayed, Tillich responded, "No! I do not pray; I meditate."

For this reason, Jesus taught his disciples that prayer is essentially a revolt against evil. The life of a rebel is smothered with prayer. Prayer is rebellious because it refuses to accept human depravity as the normal experience among men. Prayer is the weapon that angry men use to confront the forces of evil around them. And, this is what makes Christianity so different than the philosophies and religions in the world. Christians are in revolt against corruption among men. They do **not** seek to make peace with evil, escape from it, run from it, or hide from it. Christians confront evil through prayer.

The lesson for Christians is twofold: (a) Nothing destroys prayer like resignation, and (b) evil multiplies in an environment of prayerlessness.

**Second, Christians ought always to pray and not to faint because Christians have a license to pray.**

The Greek word "*ought*" (dei/n) is a word that places a duty or injunction on men. It is a polite command that calls people to enjoin the process of prayer.

By using the adverb "*always*" (pa,ntote), Jesus provides us with a license to pray any time any place. This view of prayer is totally different than that rabbinical Judaism which taught that Jews should only pray three times in one day lest they be a pest praying. Prayer is not our idea. We did not make it up. We did not create it. It simply does not originate with man. Prayer is a law-order for kingdom citizens and a gift of God on earth for men.

To reinforce the need to always pray and not to give up, Jesus told his disciples a parable about an unjust judge who was plagued by the pleas of an irritable, unrelenting widow. Apparently, she kept showing up in court and would not leave until the unjust judge heard her case and honored her pleading. From this parable, we learn more reasons why a person should always pray and not give up.

**Third, we ought always to pray and not to faint because God is just.**

Jesus told the parable of the partisan Judge because He wanted to contrast this unjust Judge with His just Heavenly Father. Though the judge had an exalted position in life, the judge was not superior to other men. He was evil and selfish like much of humanity. Unlike the partial judge, God is good and generous. Jesus' fortiori argument is a reasoning from the lesser to the greater. If this widow, through her persistence, motivated this hard, stubborn, recalcitrant judge to act, surely, we can prevail in the courtroom of a good and just Judge.

Notice that Jesus sees prayer as a legal pleading, a motion before the Supreme Court of Almighty God. Jesus saw God as an all-powerful, all-good, and all-generous Judge. The idea that God is stingy, reluctant, and too busy for men is foreign to Jesus (See Psalm 50 – Prayer as a legal pleading).

**Four, Christians ought always to pray and not to faint because Christians have a special standing in the Court.**

He calls believers “*His elect*.” The widow was the weakest, poorest member of the Jewish society and yet she prevailed before this high and mighty judge. Surely, we who are God’s children, the apple of His eye, can receive special favors before the Court. We are not merely citizens of God’s kingdom, we are His beloved children. He may not listen to others, but surely, He will listen to us.

**Five, Christians ought always to pray and not to faint because they have a special promise.**

Jesus orders us to listen to what the unjust judge said. Then, Jesus asked an important question, “*And shall not God avenge His own elect . . . ?*” A positive answer is expected. If the unjust judge can be prevailed upon, surely, the just Judge will grant justice to His own.

Jesus continued, “*I tell you that He will avenge them speedily*.” Notice how positive our Lord is about the possibility of answered prayer. Jesus said, “I tell you . . .” is the voice of certainty. Jesus was not supposing or speculating about prayer, but speaking from His own authority.

The verb “*cry*” is in the present tense implying continual pleading. The word “*bear long*” or “*speedily*” can be translated “quickly” or “suddenly.” I think the word “*suddenly*” may be more appropriate in this section of Scripture. Jesus assures his disciples, by His own word, that God’s ears are always open to pleadings from His children and that He will answer them suddenly.

**Six, Christians ought always to pray and not to faint because the Court is always open.**

All courts in America operate between 8:00 and 5:00 PM, and recess for lunch. But, God’s court is never closed. . . never in recess. . . never over booked. For this reason Jesus anticipated God’s children would be able to plead “day and night.” There is always hope that our prayers will be answered because we always have access to the Judge.

Seven, Christians ought always to pray and not to faint because tough, persistent prayer cannot be resisted.

Notice what the unjust judge said to himself, “I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me” (18:5).

The word “*weary*” (ὀφθαλμία, *zh*) is another interesting Greek word. It means “*to strike one in the eye*.” Literally, it means “*to give another a black eye*” or “*to give one an evil stare*.” Imagine with me for a moment that old lady stomping into court day after day after day with her eyebrows wrinkled in a v, fists doubled, spittin’ on the floor, and giving the judge the evil eye. Her angry, piercing stare struck fear into his wicked heart.

When is the last time you gave God a black eye in prayer?

When is the last time you gave God the evil stare? Notice the imperfect verb in verse three, “*she was coming unto him*.” The imperfect implies continuous action in the past with present intensity, that is, this widow kept coming and coming and coming and coming into this court. When is the last time you exhausted Heaven with your constant, continual, unceasing prayers? Persistence is always the key to success in any endeavor in life whether it is music, writing, pursuing a degree, business, or prayer.

The Brazilians have a special word for perseverance. It is called “*garra*.” Garra means *finger nails*. A person with garra hangs in there with their finger nails. Columbus had garra. Halfway through his voyage

across an ocean none had ever sailed and going to a world no man had ever seen Columbus's crew urged him to turn back. They even blackmailed him emotionally by threatening mutiny. Because Columbus hung in there by his fingernails, history was changed forever.

Remember Churchill? In the darkest hour of his war against Germany, Churchill came on the radio and said to his bomb-battered, war-weary people, "Never, never, never, never, never give up." The British Bulldog spoke from the surf and foam of his soul and through his leadership, the English emerged a victor in WWII.

Have you heard of Beth Anne DeCiantes, the Olympic runner, who attempted to qualify for the 1922 Olympic trials marathon? In order to qualify as a female, she had to finish the 26 mile race in less than two hours and forty five minutes (2:45). At mile 23 her legs turned to lead. Struggling, she managed to reach the final straightaway at 2:43 and only two minutes left to qualify. Two hundred yards from the finish, she stumbled and fell. She was down 22 seconds. The crowd shouted, "Get up. Get up. Get up." With less than a minute to go, she staggered toward the finish line. Five yards from the finish line with only 10 seconds to go she collapsed again. The crowd roared. Beth could not stand up. Beth Anne DeCiantes crossed the finish line with garra crawling on her hands and knees in two hours, 44 minutes, and 57 seconds.

In conclusion, Jesus observed a weakness in human nature that hindered powerful prayer. Unanswered prayer happens because religious men are quitters and fainers. In order to correct the problem, Jesus gave the disciples a list of reasons to persevere in prayer. Surely, Jesus reasoned, men ought always to pray and not to give into evil because our good God answers the prayers coming from His persistent children.

He concluded with a question, "*When the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?*" Notice how Jesus links faith and prayer together at the last moment. The verb "*comes*" is an aorist participle talking about His first coming on earth, not His second. The idea is this: *The Son of man, having come, shall He find the faith on the earth?* What is your answer? The definite article in front of "*faith*" infers that Jesus is talking about the faith of the widow; that is, faith like the widow who was persistent in her prayer. What is our answer to Jesus' question? Of course, our answer is a "Yes!" As long as we are on the earth, Jesus will find us persisting in prayer because we believe His instructions about prayer.

### **ASSURANCE OF ANSWERED PRAYER**

***Matthew 7:7-11 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?***

We think we know how to pray . . . we even go through the motions from time to time. But, we really haven't touched the power of prayer. Prayer is what we do between brushing our teeth and combing our hair. We need to learn to pray better. And we can do so by paying attention to Jesus' prayer NOTICES. They are his assurances that the Father answers prayers.

**Mark the authority of this sermon on prayer.** It comes from the perfect Son of God who never lied and never exaggerated. Coming from the presence of His Heavenly Fathers, He publishes a Notice on the Assurance of Answered Prayer.

**Mark how positive and optimistic Jesus is about answered-prayer possibilities:** “*it shall be given you . . . you shall find . . . shall be opened unto you . . .*” He expresses no doubt, no distrust, and no skepticism. Even though later Jesus declares men are evil, Jesus announces to us here the certainty of answered prayer. This is a promise better than the winning lottery ticket. Oh, to be this positive!! Oh, to possess the confidence that God gladly hears flawed sinners and their defective prayers. Our Heavenly Father is pleased to answer our prayers! Is this our view of God?

**Mark the military orders regarding prayer.** The verbs “ask,” “seek,” and “knock” are present, active imperatives; that is, they are commands—the language of prayer. Prayer is not an option or a suggestion or a childish activity. Praying is manly. Christian soldiers are ordered by the Commander to pray . . . and it takes brute force and military discipline to pray correctly.

**Mark the different types of prayers:** “ask,” “seek,” and “knock.” There are simple and pure prayers; seeking and searching prayers; knocking and pounding at the door type prayers. Prayers are for the needy, the wanting, and the desperate. Prayers are progressive. There are stages to prayer—simple request type prayers; complex and complicated prayers. Intense prayers that demand time and commitment and urgency. How are we responding to our triple calling?

**Mark how bluntly and simply Jesus states the negative truth about men.** He says, “*If you being evil . . .*” (ponhroi. o;ntej); that is, Jesus taught that men are radically and diabolically depraved—a first class conditional in Greek; i.e. “*if and it is true that . . .*”. We often classify men as “good” or “great” or “wonderful”, which is an idealistic view of people. But, our Lord has a different theology regarding men. People are evil! Rulers and politicians and men of power are common sinners! If Jesus were to proclaim the depravity of elected officials today in America, He would receive the hatchet by the media for not being politically correct. If He were to insinuate our current president as being evil, he would be charged with a felony (HR 347 2012). Jesus does not deny that men are made in the image of God or loved by the Father, but he is real about human nature. *Evil is at work in and through men. Evil is not out there.* It is within us.

*“If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?” Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956.*

But, our Father graciously answers prayer to those who make requests to Him! God answers prayer not because we are good, *but because He is good.* Are we realistic about men? Perspective is critical. When we think that we are good enough for God to answer our prayers, we walk in pride.

Are we fearful that God won’t hear us because we are cracked and flawed? This promise assures us that God hears sinners. He Who answers also justifies and forgives.

**Mark how our Lord uses a “reduction absurdum argument” to prove that God answers prayer:** The reasoning behind a “*reduction absurdum argument*” is a pricking of the mind *by drawing a ridiculous conclusion from a legitimate premise.* In His lecture, Jesus seeks to inspire confidence in God’s willingness to answer prayer by focusing on the human father-son relationship *by drawing an absurd conclusion from a legitimate request.* Even bad fathers do not give their children rocks and scorpions when they ask for fish and bread. For a father to respond so callously is radical and absurd. Likewise, it is

insane to think that the Heavenly Father will not grant the legitimate requests of His people. Is God stingy and poor? God does not throw us bones when we ask for meat. “*The blessings of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it*” (Prov. 10:22). He does not cast us a spinning lure with a hook in it. If there is “a hitch” with an opportunity, it is not from God. If there is “good news” and “bad news” scenario, it is **not** from God. God is a Father who **only** gives good gifts to His people. Evil things are from Satan, not the Father.

Perhaps, the most difficult part of life in which we need perspective is the trials that come into our life — the loss of a job, a sudden sickness, a crushed relationship. Even the most difficult trials are appointed of God so that good things can be planted in the soil of heart. After 8 years in the Gulag of a Russian prison, Solzhenitsyn was able to say,

*“Bless you prison, bless you for being in my life. For there, lying upon the rotting prison straw, I came to realize that the object of life is not prosperity as we are made to believe, but the maturity of the human soul.”*

**Mark how Christ uses a “fortiori argument” to prove that the father answers prayer generously.**

The reasoning behind a *fortiori* argument is *if something less likely is true, then something more likely is true as well*. The language of the fortiori argument is “*how much more*” -- a lesser to greater type reasoning designed to establish certainty. If evil men know how to give good gifts to their children, *how much more* does our all benevolent, all wise, all caring, all knowing, all present, all powerful Heavenly Father know how to give what is good to His children. “*Much more*” is an adverb defining the type of giving God does. He is superlative at gift-giving. The word “*gifts*” is plural. He gives more abundantly than loving, human fathers.

Before us is a contrast between the explicit goodness of evil men and the implicit goodness of a holy God. Man is depraved . . . and though evil is at work among fathers, they can give good gifts! And, if evil men can give good gifts, how much more will a good God give excellent gifts to his children? Christ does not say that God answers prayers because we are good, or because our prayers are good, but because God is good. Prayers are answered because God is good, always good, and only good; therefore, His gifts are always good. Do we share this positive view of Father?

**Mark the phrase, “*your father which is in heaven.*”** At the time Jesus said this, He dropped a bombshell on Jewish theology. The Jews believed in a holy, transcendent God; but, a happy, condescending Father was a unique and refreshing view to them. Possibly, men saw God as holy and aloof; some may have seen Him as miserly and stingy. But, Jesus announces God as a caring, benevolent, involved Father. The Father is not a creative engineer that abandons His children to grind out an existence alone under the raw laws of nature (deism). The Transcendent condescends to meet the needs of his attentive children. Heaven’s ears are tuned to earth’s cries!

**Mark that Jesus did not say all prayers are answered.** There are many gods and many prayers in the name of those gods. But, there is only one God that answers prayer. . . and that is the God of the Bible—the one, true, infinite personal triune Spirit—the God of Creation, the God of Israel, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. His name is YHWH, the “Great I Am.” God is not a force or “the first cause,” nor is He all that exists (pantheism). Jesus offers no assurance that prayers offered to man-made gods have the same wonderful result as that of a Christian praying to his Heavenly Father. He offers no assurance that the prayer of rebels receives a hearing. But, he does offer God’s children the assurance that their Heavenly Father delights in being a good to His children.

**Mark that God's view of good is different from man's view of good.** Jesus taught that God gives “good things.” God is good all the time and only gives good gifts to His sons. But, only God can define what is good. An anomaly arises because we define “good” in terms of the material and the sensual, but God defines “good” in terms of the spiritual.

In Luke 11:3 in a similar sermon, Jesus adds, “*how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*” Men tend to define “good” in terms of “stuff.” But, Jesus sees the greatest good as the gift of the Holy Spirit. “*He blesses us with every spiritual blessing*” says the Apostle (Eph. 1:3). Even our suffering produces good (Romans 8:28). Our daily concerns are about paying bills, buying cars, and accumulating more cash. It’s the economy, stupid!” said the Clinton administration. Christians are intensely concerned about the money, the stock market, jobs, inflation and gas prices, but who is concerned about a shortage of the Holy Spirit? What is the real crisis in America? “It is a want of Holy Spirit-filled Christians!” Surely, we should be coveting more of the fruits of the Spirit like “Love, joy, peace . . .” (Galatians 5:22-23) and be less concerned about “stuff.”

All believers have the Holy Spirit, but not all are filled with the Spirit or yielded to His work of transforming us into the image of Christ. Some of us are sugar cubes; some of us are ice cubes; but, God wants to make us cubes of salt—the type of Christians that confront evil and heal men. For this task, we need a greater portion of the Holy Spirit.

Our goals are too earthly; our vision too merky; our ambitions too tiny; our expectations too cursory; and, our wants too fleshly. We need an expanded view of God; an enlarged expectation; a brighter light; a sharper vision; a greater discernment; a change in priorities; a more positive view of possibilities; and, a more intense commitment to prayer.

We are served NOTICE by Jesus. Be assured, God answers prayer!!

## 82. THE CALL TO HOLINESS

### THE CALL TO HOLINESS IN PETER

*ESV* 1 Peter 1:15 *but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,*

Two errors crop up in the field of preaching: first, to preach “God’s work in us by the Holy Spirit to the near exclusion of God’s work for us in Christ;” and, second, to preach “Christ’s work for us at the expense of Christ’s work in us.”<sup>74</sup> Sanctification, the process of becoming holy, is not optional. It is an error to separate sanctification from justification just as separating works from faith or law from grace is an error.

Peter mentions the **five calls** of God in his letter to the diaspora, and one of them is the “call to be holy:”

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<sup>74</sup> Geoffrey Paxton, The Nature of a Christian, Nov. 6, 1973, Lecture to Grace Bible Institute, Omaha, Nebraska.



- The call to be saved (2:9)
- The call to be holy (1:15)
- The call to suffer (2:21)
- The call to love (3:9)
- The call to glory (5:10)

Holiness involves separation from evil and dedication to God. In 1 Peter, the standard of holiness is the character of God (1:16) as reflected in God's Law-word as well as the person of Christ. Like ancient Nazarites who dedicated themselves to God and separated from "dead things" and "wine," God wants all his people to be holy unto him – to separate themselves from the worst and the best the world has to offer.

The strength of the saints is their holiness. Samson was a Nazarite from birth and was known for crushing the Philistines with his Herculean strength. The lesson of his life to the nation of Israel was if God could be this strong in one Nazarite, what could He do with a nation of Nazarites? The nation never learned the lesson.

Holiness includes the setting apart of man's spirit, soul, and body. Biblical holiness rejects any system that creates a dualism between flesh and spirit as did the Gnostics.

*1 Thessalonians 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and (I pray God) your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The Spirit is concerned that our spirit, soul, and body reflect holiness. It would be a mistake to attempt to be holy in mind without applying holiness to our body.

Holiness touches our habits, our character, and our relationships.

*James 1:19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.*

Here holiness makes a demand on the mind, mouth, and emotions. In 1 Corinthians 6, 1 Thessalonians 4, and Ephesians 5, holiness makes a demand on man's sexual nature; that is, to abstain from fornication and impurity.

(See the section on sanctification in this manual).

## **THE CALL TO HOLINESS IN 2 CORINTHIANS 7**

Perfecting holiness ought to be the intense concern of every Christian. But, how can we do it?

To answer this question, we must go backward from 2 Corinthians 7:1 into chapter 6 and into chapter 5.

**First: Holiness begins with a volitive act.**

***2 Corinthians 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.***

The participle "*cleanse*" comes from the Greek words *karthirizo* which means "to purge." We get the word "*cartharsis*" from this term which means "to purify" or "to cleanse."

The Greek participle (*cleanse*) is a subjunctive, volitive aorist<sup>75</sup> referring to a completed action in the past and **not** an ongoing, moment by moment process; that is, it refers to the quality of a decision – to start now if you have not done so! Paul holds out the hope and duty that all Christians have made a decision to separate themselves substantially from “filthiness . . .” and dedicated themselves to the perfection of holiness. “Perfecting holiness” is dependent on a once-for-all decision to separate from evil and to seek God’s will.

“*Perfecting holiness*,” however, is a present participle implying continual separation from "unclean" matters in this life and continual devotion of the man wholly and totally to the will of God.

"*holiness*" is an attribute of God that refers to His righteous and unique character (5:21).

"*holy*" is an adjective describing one's separation from sin's corruption and one's devotion and nearness to God or being Christ-like.

"*perfecting holiness*" comes from the present, active participle "*epi-teleo*" which means "to complete" or "*to finish*" -- to arrive at the goal line of holiness. It carries the idea of being totally consecrated and devoted to God and His purposes for members of His family.

"to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit" is the **negative** side of holiness; that is, the phrase references what we must separate ourselves from.

"*filthiness*" refers to all those things that defile and dirty a man morally and spiritually.

The **positive** side of holiness is drawing near to the Lord.

"*in the fear of God*" describes the motivation for holiness . . . the fear of displeasing him . . . and, his love to draw us to Christ while saving our souls "reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ" (5:18-19).

### **Second: Holiness seeks the fulfillment of His promises.**

"*Having therefore these promises*" is a reference back to 2 Corinthians 6:17.

***2 Corinthians 6:17-18 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.***

The pledge "*I will receive you*" refers to the Father's promise to accept, love, and provide for His holy ones. He is a Father to His children, but to enjoy Him, one must fulfill three conditions of the promise:

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<sup>75</sup> The aorist subjunctive emphasizes a single, completed action, even as one anticipates a future act: that is, a requisite for a future act is dependent on a past act.

**Condition one:** "*come out from among them,*" that is, a man must separate himself from the impious and their idolatries.

**Condition two:** "*be ye separate*" refers (negatively) to building a fence between yourself and the faithless as well as (positively) dedicating one's self to the Lord.

**Condition three:** "*touch not the unclean thing.*" The word "touch" (*hatomai*) is an imperative commanding the believer to not "*embrace,*" "*fellowship,*" or "*make a commitment*" to enjoy the unclean (*akathartos*) "*pleasures of sin*" for a season (Hebrews 11:25).

**Condition Four:** Holiness avoids worldliness and the unequal yoke.

**2 Corinthians 6:14** *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

**Background:** This verse is often used to warn Christians about marrying a non-Christian, but it involves other applications.

Corinth was a major commercial center. To be a business man and to sell a product or service, one had to be a member of a craftsman's guild -- a commercial corporation. Each guild had a "god" or an "idol" that allegedly helped partisans to build and sell their crafts to shoppers. These guilds set up conventions, exhibitions, and expos not only to market their products but to honor the "god" or "idol" allegedly giving them success. Feasting, drinking, and celebrating these gods involved intoxication, frolicking, and debauchery. Many Corinthians participated in these festivals for commercial gain and to build rapport with other merchants. But, in so doing they became a stumbling block or "an offence;" i.e., they hindered the progress of the gospel (See 5:3).

Paul pounds the hammer of truth on these compromisers: ". . . what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" Separation was the order of the day.

Herein lies a principle: Christians are in the world, but not of the world. They can interact with and interface with unbelievers, but believers cannot do what infidels do; say what they say; or go where they go without compromising the faith. Holiness is **not** contagious, but worldliness is. Therefore, the Christian must avoid certain social events in order to carry out his calling to be holy. "Others may, I cannot."

**Condition Five:** Holy people do "not receive the grace of God in vain."

**2 Corinthians 6:1** *We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.*

"*as workers together with Him (Christ)*" means that Paul's missionary team was in the harness pulling the gospel plow. They were Christ's co-workers (*eugernountes* - 6:1) co-servants (*doulos*) and co-ministers (*diakonos* - 6:4); that is, they were *ministers* that gave up certain rights in order please God and to serve Him.

"*We beseech you*" glows from the sunshine in Paul's spirit: "*beseech*," *parakeleo*, expresses the tender warmth of Paul's love. He pleads with them to perfect their calling (7:1) and not to receive the grace of God in vain (6:1).

The word "*vain*" means without complete effect or impact on the soul; i.e., . . . uselessly, fruitlessly, pointlessly. It is like a man being bootless in the jungle. A Christian who understands the love of God in Christ gives Him his all. He doesn't hold back. He yields his mind, will, emotions, and body to Him. Fans of a football team will cheer after a win. Something is wrong if fans don't shout and smile. Likewise, something is wrong if believers don't yield their precious all to Christ after discovering the marvelous benefits of being reconciled to God.

The Corinthians, however, woke up every morning feeling like they had a choice to serve God or not serve God; to obey His law or not to obey His law; to do good or to do evil. Ellicott explains,

*"Those to whom he wrote had believed and been baptized, and so they had "received the grace;" but "the freedom of the will to choose good or evil remained . . ."*

A true minister of Christ has no choices in life in regards to good and evil; that is, he knows the Lord has already made that choice for him; and, he is obligated to surrender to his Lord.

Six: holiness requires the man to have totally reconciled to God in his spirit, soul, and body.

***2 Corinthians 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation . . . Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye (totally) reconciled to God.***

One of the problems with the Corinthians was that they were fond of the Lord, but not in love with the Lord; that is, they were half-baked, cursory, superficial, and slipshod in their devotion to the Lord.

The inexplicable love of God for us is compressed into the text, ". . . all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. . . . to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. "

"*All things are of God.*" The definite article related to "*things*" directs us back to "*all things*" being new in Christ Jesus; and, to Paul's ministry of preaching a gospel of reconciliation to God (5:17-18).

***Barns:*** "*He makes the statement general, however, showing his belief that not only these things were produced by God, but that all things were under his direction, and subject to his control. Nothing that he had done was to be traced to his (Paul's) own agency or power, but God was to be acknowledged everywhere.*"

This is the first time Paul uses the word "*reconcile*" in his epistles.

The word "*reconciliation*" in 5:19 comes from the Greek word "*katallage*" which refers to balancing the books, of enter-changing currency to give the correct change; that is, to make things balanced or right.

The emphasis here is about God working in Christ to reconcile men to Himself; and, **not** upon men being reconciled one to another -- a complete impossibility until the return of Christ.

In punishing Christ for our sins, God balances the books, delivers us from debt, forgives our sins, and makes it possible for us who were once enemies of God to become reconciled to Him. God did the reconciling, we need only to receive it . . . and *let it have its full impact on our soul*.

Think of a man on death row: accused, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death when suddenly the judge appears, announces a pardon, pays the debt, and sets the man free. How should the free man respond? The beneficiary of such grace falls on his knees in thankfulness and offers his precious all to the benefactor. Any other response is insane.

Paul exhorted the Corinthian church to be totally reconciled to God in their minds, emotions, and will; to respond correctly to this grace and be totally devoted to the Lord in the home, at work, and in the church; to have no will, but His will. To let every aspect of grace have its full effect; that is, to grow from babyhood into manhood spiritually.

The Corinthians seem to have been a church where the grace of God had not yet penetrated the whole man.

- They needed to grow in compassion -- 2 Corinthians 6:12
- They need to grow in a holy and separated life -- 2 Corinthians 6:14
- They needed to grow in generosity and giving - 2 Corinthians 8:7

Every command in Paul's letter addressed a shriveled condition of the Corinthians.

The true mark of carnality is one that believes he still has choices in life. The true mark of a Christian impacted by such grace is that he surrenders his precious all to the will of God: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done!"

Holiness does **not** involve "speaking in tongues," jumping up and down in a pew, or waiving one's hand in the air trying to touch this holy God. Rather, holiness involves separation from the world, and total devotion to the will of God -- the road less followed.

Perfection is the opposite of a glass half-filled with water.

## **INSIGHTS ON SANCTIFICATION**

Sanctification is opposed to eastern mysticism, the new age movement, and pop psychology. Holiness is not developed by introspection or by digging around in the graveyard of the past. It occurs mystically following deep fellowship with Christ. Pop psychology is infatuated with personal, historical, archaeological road mapping of people's past personal experiences. This is contrary to the path of holiness in Scripture which is the pursuit of Christ.

***2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord (not inside self), are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.***

Mark the process of change. We are **not** changed by looking at our past, or by taking archaeological journeys into our personal history or to locate blame points for our behaviors in order to accuse others for

our deficiencies. We are **not** changed by psychoanalysis or psychotherapy. We are **not** changed by “making the right choices.” The ongoing transformation of believers happens when we meditate, think about, consider, and behold the beauties of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The verbal “*beholding*” (katoptrizo,menoi) is a present participle indicating that the beholding is *a continuous action*.

The word “*changed*” (metamorfou,meqa) is a passive indicating that change happens to us as a result of a *Christ-centered focus*. We get the word “*metamorphosis*” from the word Greek word translated into “*changed*.”

Sanctification occurs when the believer grasps his new identity in Christ; that is, his “baptism” or forensic consignment and identification with the life and history of Christ (Romans 6). It is far more important to understand Christ’s history and victory over sin than it is to grovel around in one’s past failures locating blame points for degenerate behaviors. Furthermore, personal history was dealt with as far back as Adam (Romans 5). Our past no longer exists before God. Therefore, we must not let our past dominate our present behavior. Your future is not determined by your past but *what you believe about your past!!* If the past is the leading component that determines our future as pop psychologists suggest, the people with deviant behaviors have no hope because their past never changes!! This is why psychology is a broken crutch that pierces the souls of fools.

The good news of the Bible is that when a person comes to Christ, their past is of no-consequence to God. The believer is viewed as being “in Christ.” He is “dead to sin” and “alive to God” (Romans 6:1-14).

Sanctification occurs when the believer “*thinks*” (*reckons or imputes*) correctly about his union with Christ; that is, when he lets his mind catch up with His new identity in Christ (Paul is saying, “You are alive to God, now think like it!” (Romans 6:11).

Sanctification occurs when the believer interacts with truth. The truth will set you free. And, His Word is truth. God’s Word is sufficient. One does not need a psychologist or a psychoanalyst or psychotherapy to be complete. He needs to understand what God’s Word says about his new position in Christ. The truth of God’s Gospel sanctifies the man—not the truth about one’s distorted past. All truth is **not** God’s truth!! The truth talked about here is the truth of God’s Word. If a man seeks holiness, he must seek the Word of God (John 8:32; 17:17, 19).

*John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

Sanctification is justification in action, that is, it is the result of living under the judicial declaration of justification. Justification involves faith. Sanctification involves obedience. Preaching the sovereignty of God to the exclusion of human responsibility is not Biblical. We should not sing, “Standing on the Promises” and “sit on the premises.”

|               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| Justification | Sanctification |
| God           | godly          |
| Love          | lovingly       |
| Hope          | hopefully      |

|        |                              |
|--------|------------------------------|
| Lord   | obedience                    |
| Savior | fellowship with other saints |

Just as sanctification is justification in action, sanctification is godliness in action. In justification, we are declared righteous; in sanctification we live righteously. In justification we receive God's love; in sanctification, we live lovingly. In justification we have hope, but in sanctification, we live hopefully. To be justified, we confess Christ as Lord; but in sanctification, we obey Him as Lord. In justification, we accept Christ as Savior and ourselves as sinners; but in sanctification, we seek to accept Christ as our life and live as saints.

Faith is always vertical. It is never horizontal. It is **not** faith in faith; faith in conversion; faith in church; or faith in change. Faith does **not** look inside as a basis of hope or power. It does **not** inspect the belly button. Faith always looks up to God's mercy and His work in Christ. Faith never loses sight of God's love. It never wants to hurt God.

*Romans 8:34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died-*

*Galatians 5:6 Love is the outworking of faith toward God, thus, we have "faith working through love."*

## **PRINCIPLES OF SANCTIFICATION**

### **Martin Lloyd Jones (Jones, 1990)**

*"Sanctification is primarily the application of the truth to ourselves, it is not first and foremost having or receiving and experience" (Jones, Masterpiece, March/April, 1990, p. 7).*

*" . . . our main and basic need in sanctification is not power but light and knowledge and instruction" (Jones, p. 8).*

*" . . . most of our troubles in this matter are ultimately in the realm of the will" (Jones, p. 10). The problem with victory over sin is not God's willingness to deliver or His power to deliver, but a will that does not want to be delivered. The problem is a divided will.*

*" . . . the will . . . is never coerced or forced into a decision." (Jones, p. 10). God does not blackmail people emotionally into a forced decision. A man "must never be approached directly, because the will must always be approached through truth" (Jones, p. 11).*

*"Sanctification means being devoted to God, not only separated from the world but separated unto God and sharing His life -- it is positive holiness" (Jones, p. 12).*

*" . . . the New Testament method of dealing with a particular sin is never to concentrate upon the particular sin as such, but to bring it into the light and the context of the whole Christian position" (Jones, p. 12).*

*" . . . sanctification must never be thought of as an end in itself but rather as a means to an end. The goal, I say, is not even to be holy men, nor to attain holiness, but rather to live in fellowship with God. Our goal is the knowledge and the love of God and of His Son Jesus Christ. The goal is not to be sanctified, but that I should be walking in fellowship with Him . . . " (p. 12, 13).*

*"You can get the impression that the truth which leads to sanctification is really a very simple truth, just one little message . . . but this truth about which our Lord speaks is the*

*whole Christian truth! It includes all of the epistles, all the Sermon on the Mount and the teaching of the Gospels. It is the whole Bible . . . ” (Jones, p. 13).*

### **SANCTIFICATION AND THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT**

In NT times, Judaizers robbed the church of joy and sought to chain believers to the dictates of Talmudic case law -- a system that rejected Torah in favor of Rabbinical decisions.

Today, the church seems to frown on rules for godly living. Many coming into the church today recklessly pursued a life of drugs and licentiousness. Many are expecting the same high from religion as they found in their former life. And, this “high” is often discovered in Charismatic circles. But, this movement is a farce and the believer would do well to avoid its presumptions and to avoid the wild and fanciful diversions of the Charismatics.

Be a Biblical charismatic by looking at Christ, standing on the authority of Scripture seeking a Spirit-filled life, and growing in Christ-like character—that is, the fruits of the Spirit (See the Appendix, Nike 138 & 161).

### **HOLINESS AND ROMANS 14**

Holiness does not mean that a Christian is to live like a recluse and withdraw to some cave and act like a medieval monk. Christians are called to evangelize the lost and this means *we must take holiness to the hedges of society*.

Holiness does **not** mean one has to be bullied about by the consciences of other men. It means he must grow in his knowledge of God’s Word, and let God’s Word guide him in all that he does. One of the problems that surfaced in the church at Rome was the Jews sought to control the Gentiles by emotionally blackmailing them with their weak Jewish conscience. The Gentiles reacted by condemning their Jewish brethren for their narrow-mindedness (Romans 14).

John Aldridge once gave a message called, “*Meat Eaters Make Better Evangelists*.” His premise was that in order to be to win people to Christ, Christians must get outside their comfort zones and go where the people are congregating. He recognized the problem of compromise, but said the greater problem was the failure of Christians to mix socially with non-Christians. He argued that Christians were actually trained to be “*weak brothers*” (Romans 14) and, therefore, were ineffective in Evangelism. He called for Christians to exercise their freedoms (without compromise) in order to win the lost, and to not allow themselves to be restricted by the narrow convictions of fellow believers. He went on to discuss the meaning of Romans 14. Below is a summary of his analysis.

Below is a classification of terms in Romans 14 regarding the subject of “Doubtful Things.”

#### **PROFESSIONAL WEAKER BROTHER**

This person lives a very restricted life. He is ultra conservative on all issues, but he is psychologically and experientially mature. He is weak by choice, and he is in no danger of being stumbled by the freedoms of others. He uses “weakness” as an excuse to control the choices of others. His views are not normative,



and the church must not allow itself to be bullied around by domination tactics of this professional weaker brother.

### **THE GENUINE WEAKER BROTHER**

This brother lives a very restricted life and exercises few freedoms. However, his position may not be lifelong. He has adopted a conservative position out of fear of offending God or offending the professional weaker brother. He needs acceptance, but he also needs instruction so that his life is not dominated by the preferences of others.

### **THE MATURE NON-PARTICIPATING BROTHER**

This brother has limited his freedoms out of love for others. He acknowledges the freedom to participate in social practices that are not morally tainted and does not condemn those who do engage in these activities. He is ready to defend Christian liberties, but he is also ready to instruct those who abuse those liberties.

### **THE MATURE PARTICIPATING BROTHER**

This brother chooses to exercise his liberty in order to penetrate the unchurched world. His goal is to draw near to the lost. He is social, and he reflects the culture in his dress, vocabulary, and behavior (without sinning). He is a champion of personal freedom, but his motivation is to win people to Christ.

### **THE IMMATURE PARTICIPATING BROTHER**

This brother is a champion of personal liberties. He detests the professional weaker brother and the genuine weaker brother. He cares little about the faith of others as long as his liberality is unchallenged. He is a full participant in Christian liberties and he refuses to limit his behavior though it may cause others to truly stumble in their Christian walk.

### **TAKING HOLINESS TO THE HEDGES**

There is no doubt that many Christians lack strong convictions, especially on the major issues of Scripture. On the other hand, Christians have also bludgeoned one another with strong convictions in matters of preference. How do we penetrate the unchurched, sin-laden society without compromise, and how do we do so without stumbling weaker brothers in pursuit of holiness? How do we keep the limitations of others from becoming our ball-and-chain while seeking to identify with the "publicans and sinners?"

**Two models** are provided for us in Scripture: that of John the Baptist, the austere, monastic, devoted holy man from the deserts of Judea, and the Lord Jesus Christ, the social, upbeat, in-contact rabbi for the common man in the streets.

Today, we are witnessing **two phenomena**: On one hand we have a whole segment of devoted disciples who are polarized around the John-the-Baptist lifestyle; and on the other hand we have the moral failures of movers and shakers in the televangelism world being exposed. How do we evangelize without compromise? Consider the following:

1. There is no impact without contact. Research has shown (1990s) the average person won to Christ has had about five to six contacts with genuine Christians prior to his conversion. But the average three year old believer has no non-Christian friends. The two must come together.
2. Our mission is to take holiness to the hedges (the land of beer cans and poker chips).
3. In order to make a radical difference there must be radical identification with the non-churched world.
4. While the mature, personal evangelist must avoid evil, it is not always possible to avoid the appearance of evil. Criticism is inevitable for the one walking through the gutters in order to rescue men from hell.
5. The church needs to affirm the validity of both lifestyles; that of the churchman who is seeking to live a holy life, and that of the scraping evangelist who penetrates the unchurched network of society to win people to Christ.

## **83. THE CALL TO FLEE FORNICATION**

Catholics distinguish between mortal (grave) sins and venial (pardonable) sins.

In Catholic sophia, a "mortal" sin is an act that seriously threatens one's relationship to God; whereas, a "venial" sin is something that is so commonly human it is more easily forgivable.

If there is an argument for distinguishing between mortal sins and venial sins, this passage supports the Catholic argument.

In 1 Corinthians 6:18, the apostle distinguishes between the deadly sin of fornication and other sins common to man:

***18 "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."***

Ellicott references the seriousness and solemnness of the sin of fornication in the litany, "*From fornication, and all other deadly sin, good Lord, deliver us.*"

Let's take a serious look at this passage and see if we can understand the Apostle's argument on the deadly sin of fornication.

***12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.***

While Christian men are **not** free to chose their own law-order, free men are **not** bound by the conscience of other men.

God's law is absolute. Where He has spoken, men are obligated to obey. Where there is no law, men are generally free to do what duty demands. But, just because people are free to do a thing does not mean it is *prudent* or *expedient* to do so. Freedom has limitations. There is **no** such thing as absolute freedom.

Freedom is the fruit of responsible living. Paul chose not to engage in certain lawful activities because it might hinder his service to Christ. "Others may, I cannot."

There is all the difference in the world between eating things sacrificed to idols (1 Corinthians 8:4) (a matter of expediency), and the committing fornication (a deadly sin).

***13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.***

Paul is setting up a contrast between matters of necessity like eating certain foods, and fleshly indulgences -- absolute "mortal" prohibitions like fornication.

One's choice of foods is permissible, fornication is inadmissible. The former is consensual; the latter is banned. Real law is an expression of the will of a supreme Sovereign. It does not involve one's consent. Law is duty! No man is bound by statutory decrees, but all men are bound by prohibitions in the common law like "do not commit adultery . . . and do not steal." (James 4:12; Romans 13:8).

Obligations arise out of contracts (consensual parties) or out of operation of law; i.e., mandatory obligations to a Sovereign designed to prevent injury to a person or to property.

Fornication is **not** a right or harmless recreation; it is a sin that injures both parties.

The word "*fornication*" comes from the word "*porneia*," illicit sexual acts other than marriage. The word "*pornography*" comes from "*porneia*" which refers to the "*writings of pimps and whores*."

Lawful matters are to be decided upon the highest principles of pragmatism and expediency; but, fornication is an unlawful act, and therefore the question of its pragmatism and expediency does not surface in this pilgrim journey on earth.

Paul explains the purpose of the body by negating any thought that the body is for sexual pleasure with consenting adults.

The body is not like can of coke where you consume the beverage and throw the can away.

**The purpose of the body** is to house the Spirit of God . . . to be His temple . . . to be His "home base" from which He accomplishes His holy purpose on earth.

***14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.***

The plural pronoun "*us*" encompasses spirit, soul, and bodies of righteous men. God saves the whole man and not just his soul.

In verse 19, the body is identified as "*the temple of the Holy Spirit*." Since this is so, we dare not scribble *porneia-graffitii* on the holy temple using stalk-leaves from the Poisonous Tree.

***God made the stomach for food and food for the stomach. Both will be destroyed by death.***

But, God intends is to save the whole man including his outer and inner man. For the "*body*" is equivalent to the "*us*" in this passage.

***15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.***

"Know ye not" contains a slight rebuke considering there were Corinthians who were ignorant of the fact their bodies are joined to Christ.

There is **no** right for using the body to commit fornication, Paul confronts the insane reasoning that it is possible to take the member-body away from Christ and make it a member-body of a prostitute through an act of fornication.

The double act of "*taking the body away*" from Christ and joining God's temple with a harlot is not plausible or credible.

The exclamation-prohibition, "*God forbid!*" (*me genoito*) is in the Optative Mood meaning, "it is impossible!!"

There is no way under heaven a man or woman can commit fornication and be a true Christian in fact. *God forbid!*

What a rebuke to the lax, indulgent, permissive religionist in today's society!

***16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.***

We have here another reason to flee fornication – union with an *odious* woman. There is no such thing as casual sex. A sex act binds and unites. "Do not know" is an assertion that Paul's statement is true, correct, certain, and not misleading.

*Conjugation* means "*oneness*" with a whore (the strange woman in Proverbs) is a reprehensible knowledge for the God-seeker! There is **no such thing** as a "Christian" fornicator any more than there is such a thing as a "Christian" prostitute (6:9).

***17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.***

By being "*joined unto the Lord*" in one spirit does **not** mean we are married to Christ in a spiritual sense as some nuns propose.

The union here is a spiritual one. Our union with Christ is intimate but mystical. We are united in faith, in ambition, and in purpose but not "married" to Him matrimonially. Paul intensifies the argument against any degradation of the body by an act of fornication.

***18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.***

There are few things more heretical than the fallacy that Christians are at liberty to choose their own law order.

Is there anything more clear than God's solemn command: "*flee fornication*"?

Immediate flight is the **only** remedy for avoiding this deadly sin (See Joseph in Genesis 39).

### **What an egregious sin fornication must be!**

"*without the body*" means some sins profane the outer court of the temple without touching the holy place within the heart. Fornication defiles the inner sanctuary; that is, fornication injures the core of one's soul . . . his naos . . . his holy of holies . . . the very covenant on which his relationship to God is supposed to be founded.

"*sinneth against his own body*": The "*body*" in this passage is enlarged to include the whole man: spirit, soul, and body. Paul claims the body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit with a "*naos*" (inner sacred altar) that includes a meeting place where God meets with man! When one commits fornication, he commits a deadly sin that injures the whole man.

Other sins may only profane the outer courts of the temple; the sin of fornication defiles the very holy of holies within God's body-temple.

Thus, fornication is different from common sins in that *it damages the whole man*, poisons faith, and sullies the conscience.

Ellicott observed, fornication "hardens a' within, and petrifies the feelings."

It is the man that sins, not the flesh; fornication *corrupts the whole man*, not just the human body.

*Matthew 15:15-20 But Peter said to him, "Explain the parable to us." 16 And he said, "Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? 18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. 20 These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."*

Fornication is a deadly, mortal sin. No one can commit this sin without thunder erupting from Mount Sinai because of his trespass against the King's law-order.

Thus, we have the solemn order, "*Flee fornication*." This is **not** an option . . . or choice. It is command.

***19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?***

"*Do you not know*" is a rebuke of ignorance.

Our bodies do not belong to government, governors, legislators, to the whims of social engineers, or the desires of a seductress.

We are owned by Another; that is, Christ has all rights over our bodies.

While in a political sense, we are sovereigns over our body; in a spiritual and legal sense, our bodies are not our own; they belong to our Lord and Savior.

That is, we act as his stewards over our bodies. We care for our bodies as ones who must give account on how one pilots his own vessel.

Paul gives **two reasons** we do not have absolute rights over our own bodies: (1) our bodies are inhabited by the Holy Spirit; and (2) we have been bought and purchased by the blood of Christ.

**20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.**

Christians have been bought and are therefore owned by Another. Paul emphasizes *you are not your own*; i.e., you do not have absolute rights over your body! Your body is subject to God's rules!

The price of this purchase is the precious "*blood of Christ*," the currency of the spirit world (1 Peter 1:18-20).

Because we are not our own, we have a duty to glorify God in our whole being all the time.

Fornication, tattooing our body, and masking our faces in public shames the Savior.

## 84. THE CALL TO FLEE IDOLATRY

**1 Corinthians 10:14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.**

"*dearly beloved*" refers to Christians . . . not the world.

Paul's prohibition against idolatry is case law for the First and Second Commandments which includes the command to flee **the idolatrous practice of tattooing**.

*"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."* – Exodus 20:3

*"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth"* – Exodus 20:4

*"Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy . . . Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD."* Leviticus 19:2, 28

*"Little children, keep yourselves from idols."* – 1 John 5:21

The Scriptures proclaim one absolute God and one absolute law order.

The premise that we live in a multi-universe with multiple law orders is *a product of polytheism* – a *legal positivism that denies the existence of One Absolute God*.

America has become more and more pluralistic adopting the notion that every man is free to choose his own religion and the kind of law that will govern his own life. Thus, one sign that America has rejected Christianity and become polytheistic is tattoos on arms, hips, and legs.

*Multiculturalism* (polytheism) is **not** a strength, but a weakness to overcome.

Few things are more derelict than the presumption that Christians are at liberty to choose their own law. Since America has moved away from a Christian culture to a pluralistic, humanistic one, tattooed people are everywhere.

**Tattoos are a product of idolatry**; that is, they have their source in one's own personal god. At the time a person obtains a tattoo, their icon represents that person's highest value – a product of their cultic, humanistic, polytheistic religion. When every man makes his own gods and his own laws, society descends into anarchy and totalitarianism.

The LORD God forbids Christians to graffiti their God-given body with *black ink* because **tattoos are acts of idolatry** – a violation of the First and Second Commandments.

The ultimate wish of the Christian religion is the kingdom of God and a world order under God's Law. **Tattoos are individual expressions of one's rejection of God's kingdom on earth.**

To tolerate tattoos among Christians is to subsidize it. For tattoos are fundamentally anti-Christ — an adolescent dismissal of God's of law-order.

If one has a tattoo, they will need to repent deeply of the sin of idolatry. Deep sins call for deep repentance.

## **85. THE CALL TO OBEY GOD'S LAW**

*2 Thessalonians 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:*

*1 Timothy 1:8 But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully;*

*1 Corinthians 14:21 In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.*

*1 Corinthians 14:34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.*

Hermeneutically, the challenge for the Biblical expositor has been one of continuity v. discontinuity; that is, what laws in the OT do we seek to apply to the NT age (continuity) and what statutes do we discard because they are limited in application and belong strictly to the OT dispensation?

In the early church history Christians leaned towards total syncretism of OT law with the gospel. In recent times, much of Protestantism has become antinomian rejecting law under the disguise of grace. The great flaw of the Reformation was its failure to clarify the proper use of law for believers and its civil intent.

Culturally, we have seen a chilling departure from any application of God's law to society. In Europe whole countries have legalized drugs, smoking pot, prostitution, homosexuality, and even same-sex "marriages." Churches are empty and religion is seen as either irrelevant or a suspicious enemy of the

new world order. A gospel without law lacks the teeth to bite the heels of Godless legislators secularizing entire nations.

Politically, we are living in one of the most legalistic ages of history wherein legislation is a full-time profession. “Law” (statutes) is the new savior of mankind. Legislators pass so many codes and regulations each year no man can read them all. Representative Nancy Pelosi said in regards to the Obama health care legislation, “We have to pass it so we can know what’s in it.” Congress enacts so many statutes you can’t pack ‘em all in to Farmer Brown’s new barn. The Pharisees in Judaism have moved to Washington D.C. to crank out millions of statutes controlling everything from the size of shampoo bottles you can carry on a plane to House Resolution 31 (2009) expressing support for designation of January 28, 2009 as “National Data Privacy Day.” It’s madness! And, it never ceases. At least the Bible places limits on law and therefore limits on government.

Morally, all law is based on morals. Morality itself is based upon religion. If the religion be wrong, the whole legal system leads to the death of the culture and a collapse of law and order. It has been said “You can’t legislate morality.” But, this is nonsense! Every statute represents somebody’s morality. When humanists have their way, they end up permitting the murder of unborn babies and the promotion same-sex unions. Moral anarchism is destroying social stability and will lead to some form of dictatorship. The rise of totalitarianism has always been preceded by maddening legislation that liberalizes a nation. Thus, *America’s greatest enemy* is “LAW” and the atheistic, evolutionary humanist religion that manufactures it. Man-made law has proven hostile to the Christian law order enslaving innocents and protecting criminals. Only by a return to common-sense Christianity and its view of limited law and limited government can the madness of the new Pharisees be stopped.

“*The Lord is a warrior*” and the church is his “battleax” (Exodus 15:3; Jeremiah 51:20). Thus, the battle is twofold. The Christian must fight for Biblical law because it leads to freedom while at the same time soldiering against the avalanche of legalism incubating in State legislatures wherein psychopathic lawyers are possessed with unlimited commitment to law as the means of changing society. Biblical law is necessary, but God places limits on law . . . and limits on government. “*Woe to ye lawyers for ye load people with burdens hard to bear!*” (Luke 11:46) Law can restrain evil but it cannot regenerate society.

The Biblical Christian is not a *legalist*, but neither is he *antinomian*. Peace on earth and good will to men does not come by passing ten-thousand “laws,” but by the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 2:14).

## **SOURCE OF LAW**

The prologue in Exodus 20 introduces us to the **Ten Commandments**.

**First**, Israel’s Lawgiver introduces Himself as the LORD thy God which brought thee out of Egypt; that is, the term “*LORD thy God*” declares God’s sovereignty, authority, self-existence, and absoluteness. Because He is LORD He has the right to legislate law. He is Israel’s **Source of law**.

**Second**, the phrase “*which brought thee out of Egypt*” declares God’s grace and redemptive love. He is their Savior and because He loves this nation, the Ten Commandments are a gift to His people; that is, **the Ten Commandments are a product of sovereignty and grace**. Because He is Lord, He has the authority to deliver His law to His people; because He is their/our Savior, the law is a product of His goodness for man’s prosperity and enjoyment.



**The Law is religious in nature;** that is, God is the source of Biblical Law. Every law, Biblical or not, is a product of the *god* of that society whether it be some deity or the “will of the majority” with a democratic vote. The source of law is always a *god*. *Law always reflects the ultimate concerns of society. When a society changes its gods, it changes its laws; when laws change, the society has changed its gods.* A legal revolution indicates the society is changing its religion. Modern humanism is the locus of modern law, and humanistic lawyers have declared war on God’s Law-order.

The Decalogue as well as Shema declared a truth: `dx'(a, Ÿhw"ihy> WnyhePl{a/ hw"ihy> lae\_r'f.yI (m;Pv. , “Hear, Oh Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD.”

Recited as a morning and evening prayer, the Shema declared the oneness of God; that is, His uniqueness, His solitariness, His authority, His place as Israel’s one and only Lawgiver (Isaiah 33:22; James 4:12). His law is absolute. It does not share man’s democratic process. Israel was not a democratic nation permitted to vote on whether to adopt or nullify laws they did not like. But, they did. And, for this reason they were buried in the graveyard of nations.

There is one lesson that crops up again in again in the Bible: Godly men **must** protect their Source of law. **The First Commandment, if it means anything, is that all other competing law sources must be rejected.** *One, absolute, unchanging God means there is one, absolute, unchanging law.*

Severe penalties were in place for revolutionaries that sought to displace God’s Law-order (Deuteronomy 13). Nations have their definition of treason because loyalty to the nation is important to them. Nations will not hesitate to execute traitors. But, **no** nation applies capital punishment to idolaters because that is **not** important to them.

But, Christians “*love thy law*” and know that it is the key to an orderly society and the key to limiting totalitarian governments. Therefore, the Christian must fight and scrap for the advancement of truth and the limitation of government: “*Thy kingdom come; thy will be done*” now in our time (Luke 11:2).

## **RELATIVISM**

Modern man is drunk with the view that there is no absolute truth and that everything is relative; that men should find their own “truth;” and that each person must define “their own values;” and that what is good for me may not be good for you!” Nonsense! Relativistic pluralism leads to anarchy, crime, and social suicide. ***Multiculturalism is not a strength, but a weakness to overcome.***

Modern democratic man has declared war on the Christian Law-order and have opted to pursue man’s utopia by passing countless codes that nullify God’s law and that protect man’s idolatrous values; that is, since man is the measure of all things in a humanistic society, man reshapes society by legislation that enables him to create his own universe. In the humanistic world, man is like the Sun with all his planetary legal systems circling around him.

Man-made law kills, but the truth shall set you free.

## **ABSOLUTE LAW**

In opposition to relativism is the absolute God and His law-order. **God’s law is absolute!** The Ten Commandments remains the permanent standard of right and wrong for all men. They are a reflection of God’s character. Because God’s character is eternal and unchanging, God’s **moral law** is absolute and

unchanging. God's law contains absolute moral principles that are good for all men and all of man's institutions.

To the Biblical mind **the Source of law** is the LORD God Who graciously brought Israel out of Egypt and out from underneath tyranny. The law is based on God's character which is "righteous" (Psalm 119:137), and because God is eternal, His law is absolutely righteous (Psalm 119:142, 144), but the law is limited in what it can accomplish in society. It cannot save man nor can it regenerate society, but a proper application of the law can cleanse society and suppress criminal elements at work among men. The gospel of Christ, however, saves sinner and can regenerate society. But even the law of love is limited. Love does not restrain rebels and criminals. Only a proper application of law can purge society of the criminal element.

**The whole OT Law can be summarized under three virtues:** justice, mercy, and faithfulness to God (Micah 6:8; Matthew 23:23). The whole purpose of law was to assist man in administering justice in the courts, mercy on the streets, and faithfulness to God in the home. Only three requirements? No god ever required so little from a people.

God's law is basically negative, "Thou shall not . . ." Negative law restricts man behavior; that is, certain acts are forbidden making society safe and free. If all men keep God's law, you don't need to lock your doors at night. But, if they don't, you'd better use triple locks.

God's law is limited in what it proscribes, and therefore leads men to freedom. Eight of the Ten Commandments are negative law. Two are positive law. The first four commands record man's duty to God; the last six define his responsibilities to man. Where law does not restrict man's behavior, man has liberty. As long as he does not infringe on the rights of other men, he is free to follow his own ambitions. When a man's neighbors are committed to honesty and goodness as defined by God's Law-word, he is safe; but, where men follow their lusts, the neighborhood is a treacherous place to live.

Negative law limits man and requires personal constraint. Positive law places an unfettered duty upon people and requires positive energy to complete. For example, when the law says "You shall not steal" men are required to restrain themselves. When the Scriptures tells men to honor their mother and father, children are to rally their energies and to employ their assets to fulfill this duty. This is a positive command meaning there is no limit to how a child might love and respect his parents.

The Ten Commandments are not only for Christians **but for all men and all of man's institutions**. God's Law-word is good for me because it is good for all men. What a difference the world would be if civil rulers insisted on the Ten Commandments be the foundation of all law in their country. Imagine a society where men kept their oaths, protected life, executed criminals, remained faithful in marriage, accepted parental responsibility, refused to lie or cheat or defraud men in their fiduciary responsibilities?

In fact that the majority of political conflict and human suffering in nations is because rulers have declared war against God's Law-order (Psalm 2).

### **CEREMONIAL LAW**

The believing Jew or Gentile, however, is **not** under Israel's ancient ceremonial codes (Levitical sacrifices or Levitical ceremonies or cultic practices designed to separate Israel from other nations).

Those cultic Levitical codes had a specific application for a specific period of time in history. Levitical ceremonial statutes are limited in nature and ceased with the death of Christ. While men are not accountable to the ceremonial codes in the Torah, mankind has always been accountable to the universal, moral laws in the Old Testament because they are direct reflections of God's character; and, these laws are written on the conscience of all men!!

*Romans 2:15 They show that **the work of the law is written on their hearts**, while **their conscience also bears witness**, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them*

Theologians have properly made a distinction between God's absolute moral law as reflected in the Ten Commandments and the temporal cultic codes of Israel designed to isolate Israel from the national community until her Messiah was born. Christ is the "end of the law" (Romans 10:4); that is, he fulfilled the moral requirements of God's law through His obedience which enabled Him to be the Savior of men. He fulfilled all the shadows and types found in the Levitical system which ended the Levitical mediatorial system. While the moral law remains the model of law for all men, the Levitical system has been retired with honor because its purpose was fulfilled and perfected in the mediatorial work of the Son.

Jesus did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17). God's law is a positive force for good because it restrains evil. But, man-made statutes bind men with burdens too great to bear (Matthew 23). When Paul disparaged law in the NT, he was not referring God's moral law or the Ten Commandments but the Levitical law with its regulations and rabbinical case law—law that entrapped and enslaved men into a performance-based relationship with God. While Levitical law provided a temporal mediatorial service between man and God, the Lord Jesus Christ is God's permanent, appointed Mediator that intercedes between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5). Men are saved by grace, not law! But, no man is free from moral duties as iterated in the Ten Commandments and relevant case.

Men error when they separate NT commands from law. All NT commands are case law for God's moral laws.

## **LAW AND GRACE**

The purpose of the gospel is NOT to deliver men from moral law ***but to empower*** men to keep God's Law-word (Romans 8:1-4). Being a gracious, Law-abiding kingdom citizen is a grand purpose of the gospel. The gospel changes man and reconciles him to the Creator.

While the law cannot regenerate man, it can purge evil from society. The law has a civil purpose. The dominion purpose of law is to cleanse society of lawbreakers. The purpose of the gospel is to cleanse and regenerate men. Thus, the dominion mandate of the church is to make kingdom citizens by proclaiming the gospel of salvation; and, "to rebuke those who contradict" God's law order (Titus 1:9-14).

While men are under duty to God's law, they are also set free from Judaism and the cultic laws of Israel. When the NT speaks of being free from law it speaks of being free from Judaism and any system of law that claims to mediate between man and God. Those under God's Law-order have a duty to resist religious and civil authority that seek total jurisdiction over total man to total government.

*Galatians 1:13 For you have heard of **my former life in Judaism**, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.*

Galatians 4:9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?

*Galatians 1:14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the (Talmudic, Judaistic) traditions of my fathers.*

*Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery (Judaism).*

*1 Corinthians 7:23 You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men (or government).*

The Christian is not only not under Rabbinical case law, he is under law as a means of justification or sanctification (Romans 3:21ff; 6:14; 8:5-9; Galatians 2:16; 3:1-14). While the ends of sanctification is moral duty, **the means** is by the work of the Spirit. The word “law” in Romans 6:14 lacks the article; that is, the Christian is not under any system of law as a means of meriting God’s favor. He is under grace; that is, the gospel of grace that brings salvation to all men and the power to do what is right as defined in God’s law (Romans 1:16).

The Christian is under duty to comply with God’s law in his own life and daily walk. The belief that a Christian has no duty to the moral principles found in the Law is a product of more than a little evil.

## **OVERREACHING**

The government of the family, the church, and civil authority are limited in their authority. The family has authority to educate children; the government does not. The government has the authority to exercise the power of capital punishment; the family and church do not. The church is the steward of the doctrines of grace, but the government is not. When mothers order the execution of their babies, it is murder. When governments seek to be god to their people, they are way overreaching. Overreaching is an addiction of modern governments and it is time to revisit the Magna Carta and the American Revolution.

The church is not a judicial institution designed to administrate justice. Justice and its penal systems are matters for civil authority. The administration of grace is the duty of the church. Just as it is wrong for the church to administrate justice towards criminals, it is overreaching for a government to take on the duties of the church. The rise of the Nanny State that sees itself as the Savior of society is an evil because it sees itself as a tyrannical church.

The purpose of government is expressed well in the Declaration of Independence as well as the remedy for overreaching administrations.

***That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, -- That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.***

Without a doubt, we are living in an age when governments no longer protect the rights of men. Instead, they use legislation to protect their power. Thus, the Christian would do well to remember the limitations of Government and the fact that there is only one Lawgiver to whom they are accountable. Who cares what statutes Congress passes? They only apply to Washington D.C. and government employees on federal territories.

***There is only one Lawgiver*** (Isaiah 33:22); that is, ***there is only one law to which a Christian is ultimately responsible***. Man's "law" is only "law" when it reflects God's Law. As the Moon reflects sunlight, man's statutes ought to mirror God's statutes. But, often times they do not. Codes and policies of the State do not rise to the level of true Law. We have no duty to man's law (statutes and codes) unless we are under contract. Private contract becomes private law—a moral duty of those bound by oath. Public law has to do with government and its operations. Again, only those under contract have a duty to public law.

There is a lawful use of the Law to the unbeliever (1 Timothy 1:9-10). Civil rulers have a duty to identify criminal acts and to purge out evil. Law has limitations. It cannot regenerate society or individuals. But, it can cleanse the land of wickedness.

There are theological forces at work in Christianity that militate against law and order. Not only are Christians under obligation to obey God's Law, all men and their institutions have a duty to the Law of God. Christians should obey good laws and a good government. But, good government should obey God's good laws also.

God alone can define what is good. Humanists are feverishly devoted to enacting legislation that redefines "good" according to their definition of good. To the humanist, more law and bigger government seems to be good. *Any doctrine that encourages total obedience to total government is totally flawed*. When a state does not define good and evil using God's Word as the canon of righteousness it ends up ruling its citizens by man-made statutes. Consequently, we now have a country that permits acts of murder, adultery, theft, and Sodomy.

A force behind this godless trend is **antinomian theology** embedded in mainstream Christianity. Antinomianism denies the right use of God's law in civil government. Antinomians fail to confront evil in government because they deny God's law as applicable to the state. Remember, God's law is good for Christians because it is good for all men. It is not enough for the Christian to keep God's law and let other men do as they please. God's law is for all men and all of man's institutions (Rushdoony, 1973).

*Romans 13:10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

*Christians are called to obey good government and good laws, but they are also called to resist bad government and bad laws*. The whole idea that Christians have a duty to obey psychotic regimes is not only unbiblical, it is suicidal. Israel lost their nation in 722 B.C., not because they disobeyed their kings, but because they obeyed their rulers -- men that abandoned the Law of God and adopted the cruel and permissive laws of other nations (2 Kings 17).

#### **LADD ON LAW AND ETHICS (Ladd, 1974, p. 120):**

**Old liberalism:** Scholars that disapprove of Jesus' theology, but laud his morality grew out of liberalism in Germany during the 1800s. Peabody, Klausner, and others would like to omit Jesus' miracles, eschatological context, and theology, but keep his ethical teachings.

**Albert Schweitzer's** eschatological interpretation held that Jesus' ethical teaching were for his time. According to Schweitzer, Jesus was a disillusioned Jewish apocalyptic prophet that hoped his ethics would bring about repentance and moral renewal compelling the appearance of the kingdom. Thus, eschatological ethics transmitted into ethical eschatology (Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 1974, p. 122).

**Martin Diblius:** Jesus' ethics are for all men for all time, but will only find complete validity in an eschatological kingdom.

**A.N. Wilder:** The ethics of Jesus are entrance requirements into the kingdom which were not determined by eschatology, but by the character of God. The relation between the future and the present is only a formal one. Bultmann agrees saying that the kingdom demand is for decision.

**Dispensationalism:** Chafer theorize that Jesus postponed his offer of a Davidic kingdom and interprets the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount as a new legalism framed for the Millennial Age and one that is somewhat inapplicable to the age of grace. Furthermore, dispensationalism has done much damage to Christianity in bifurcating the OT moral law from NT ethics; in pitting law against grace.

**Ladd:** "We would contend that Jesus ethics can be best interpreted in terms of the dynamic concept of God's rule, which has already manifested itself in his person but will come to consummation only in the eschatological hour." (p. 124). Thus, Ladd saw the Sermon on the Mount as further development of law according to the rule of God—law consistent with the kingdom of God.

### **LAW AS THE TESTIMONY OF GOD'S CHARACTER**

All ethical and moral demands by the Creator upon His creation originate and are modeled after the character of God. The Ten Commandments are called "the testimony" (Exodus 40:20) and they were placed into the "ark of testimony" (Exodus 40:3), which was placed into the "Tabernacle of Testimony" (Exodus 38:21). The Ten Commandments were called *the testimony* because they bore witness to the character of God. While other religions had a statue in their holy place to commemorate and reflect the characteristics of their god, Israel's Holy of Holies contained a box with tablets on which words were written. The words represented not only laws and obligations binding on man, but each of those laws reflected a particular attribute of God (Psalm 119:137, 138). Because the Ten Commandments reflect God's character, they are absolute and permanent because God is eternal and His character is absolute and permanent (Psalm 119:142, 151-152).

There are **613 laws** in the Torah that can be condensed to the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments can be condensed to three laws: ***faithfulness to God, justice and mercy toward man*** (Micah 6: 8; Matthew 23:23). Furthermore, Jesus reduced them down into two fundamental principles: love for God and love for man (Mark 12:30, 31).

God's character can be summarized under **two virtues**: *Holiness* and *love*. The call to holiness is advanced based on the fact that God is holy (1 Peter 1:15ff). The call to love is based on the fact that God is love (1 John 4:8ff). Every ethical demand in the Bible in some way *reflects the character of God*. Furthermore, since Jesus is God and His character is that of God, Christians are called to reflect the character of Christ. For example, at the Last Supper Jesus told his disciples to love each other "*as I have loved you*" (John 13:34). Jesus is the Living Torah. Since the Ten Commandments are the objective

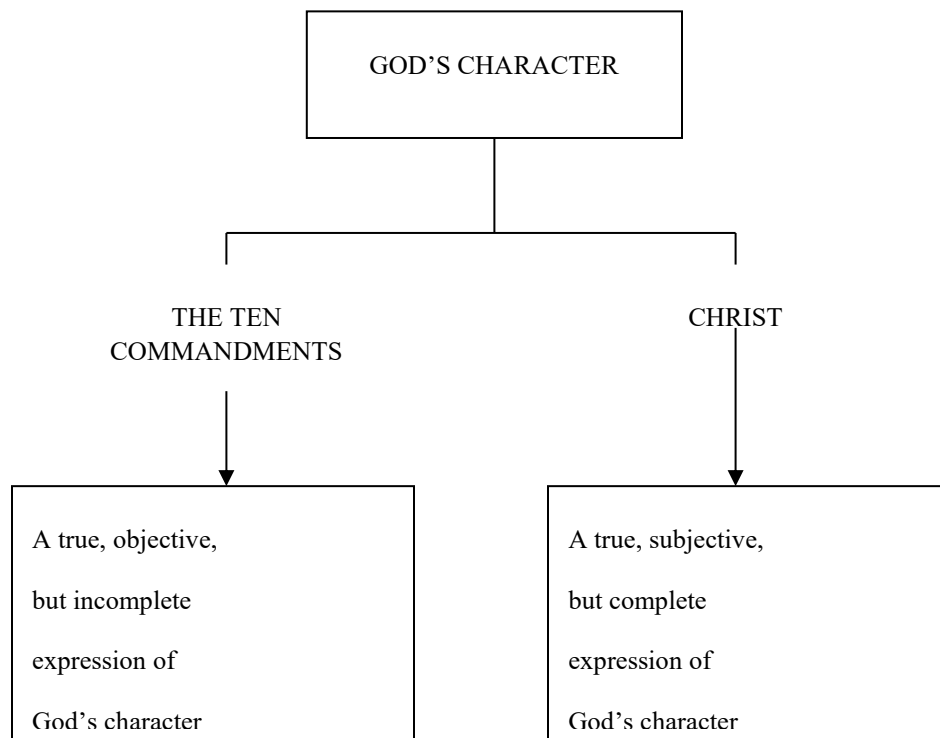
representation of the character of God, and Jesus is the subjective representation of the character of God, the Christian Source of law is rooted firmly in the character of the LORD God.

**The common law of England** was built on biblical law and advanced two principles: Do not harm your neighbor or his property, and do not defraud your neighbor. Man was free to do whatever he pleased as long as he did his neighbor no harm.

### JESUS AND THE LAW

Jesus announced the end of the age of the Law (Matthew 11:13; Luke 16:16) necessitating ethical reformation in light of the new Messianic Era and the new order between God and man in an age of grace. Those who pit Jesus' teaching against Torah set up a false dichotomy.

**Figure 14: God's Character in the Law**



**Wilder** is correct when saying that the standards in the Sermon are framed in light of the character of God (Matthew 5:48) (Wilder, 1951).

**Ladd** was correct when he said, “Jesus viewed the entire Old Testament movement as divinely directed and as having arrived at its goal in Himself. His Messianic mission and the presence of the kingdom are the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets” (p. 125).

In his book on the Sermon on the Mount, **Arthur Pink** saw our Lord as rescuing the law from the narrow interpretations of the legalistic righteousness of the Pharisees: “You have heard it said, but I say unto you . . .” Correct! Jesus did **not** pit his ethics against the Law, but saw his teachings as case law consistent

with and in fulfillment of the Torah (Matthew 5:15ff; Matthew 17:27; 23:23; Mark 14:12) (Pink A. W., 2005).

**Robert Hawkins** says (Hawkins, 1969), “Jesus is not to be set in opposition to the Mosaic Code, for His abrogation of the Law was to be by fulfillment -- not destruction” The Sermon on the Mount is case law in juxtaposition to the ball-and-chains of rabbinical lawyering. The “new” in Jesus’ presentation is that He did not base His legal determinations on rabbinic case law, but on His own authority. Ladd was correct when he said that Jesus assumed an authority equal to that of the Old Testament. His legal treatise begins with “I say unto you . . .” Ladd, 1974, p. 125).

### **ETHICS AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

The kingdom of God is the rule of God, and the Sermon on the Mount represents legal righteousness necessary to enter the kingdom of God (Matthew 5:20), “the holy habitation of Messianic salvation” and the age to come (Ladd, p. 125). Without righteousness that exceeds that of Pharisees, NO MAN WILL ENTER HEAVEN! In order to enter the kingdom a man needs perfect works. However, *the righteousness that results in justification is a gift of the Son*, and it is a present sanctifying righteousness, a righteousness that results from GOD’S REIGN IN OUR LIVES.

Jesus demands a righteousness superior to that of the Scribes and Pharisees, the professional students of religion. This sect spent a lifetime defining righteousness. For example: Rabbis had to deal with questions like, “What is work?” If I collect eggs on the Sabbath, is that work? If I bend over to pick up a lost coin, is that work?

The sermon presupposes God’s gift of the Holy Spirit as the enabling power to obey God’s law. Furthermore, it proclaims God’s reign in Christ. The sermon is not law, but gospel. God’s gift precedes His demand (Ladd, p. 126). It is good news that those in relationship to the Son know what pleases the Father. The gift of God is His mission in Christ to bring men who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” the messianic salvation of forgiveness and fellowship to sinners (Matthew 5:6). Those who experience the rule of God and submit to His reign now receive that righteousness as a gift, and they will experience His power now and the eschatological consummation of the kingdom at the end of the age.

**Ladd** says *the ethics of Jesus are kingdom ethics*, the ethics of the reign of God and “they are relevant only for those who have experienced the reign of God” in their lives (Ladd, p. 128). But, Ladd may be too narrow here. If Jesus’ ethics are the ethics of the kingdom of God, ethics that mirror the character of God, *then they are eternal ethics, ethics that are absolute*; that is, Christ’s ethics are good for all men and all of humanity.

Jesus also declared that the kingdom of God was a mystery, a secret to grasp by his followers (Mark 4:11). **The mystery of the kingdom** is that *the reign of God has entered history in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ, to win men by persuasion and not power, without purifying society, and without disrupting the political process*. Submission to his ethics in the sermon has much to do with personal thoughts, and motives. Thus, much of the Sermon is voluntary personal piety, not compulsory piety for all men. However, final consummation of this righteousness will take place in an eschatological kingdom. What is not optional is the Ten Commandments which has application for all men.

### **ETHICS AND THE INDIVIDUAL**



The emphasis of kingdom ethics is the rule of God over the human heart. It includes behavior, but more than behavior. It answers the question what will happen when faith in Jesus resides in the “castle of one’s heart” and reigns over the affairs of the individual man. The law condemned murder, Jesus condemned anger; the Law condemned adultery; Jesus condemned lustful thoughts. Where men acknowledge the kingdom, men apply God’s law to their minds, emotions, and actions.

The gift of God’s reign is character. Righteousness must flow from the “good treasure” of man’s heart. This righteousness is not quantitative, but qualitative. Its consummation is eschatological.

In reference to salvation, the ability to attain this righteousness comes when a man’s faith is kindled by the proclamation of God’s kingdom. *Kingdom proclamation leads men into a new willingness to trust Christ* and to experience for himself the powers of the kingdom of God. When a man is restored to God, he is the recipient of a *new power*, the power of the kingdom of God. This righteousness is not attainable by man’s grit and devotion (Ladd, 1974, p. 131). It can be attained, but not completely. Its fullness must await the manifestation of the kingdom of God.

To the Christian, the ethics of the kingdom are a practical ethics, but to the world, they are irrelevant and impractical. They do not advance the political agenda of politicians. **Jesus’ demand** on the individual was to accept “*my yoke*” (Matthew 11: 9); to be ready to renounce every affection (Luke 14:33); to renounce his own life (Matthew 16: 24); and to renounce his own will where it is inconsistent with kingdom life!

Submission leads to “justification” and a life of obedience under the rule of Christ. Submission to Christ, in light of His ethics, leads to “sanctification.”

The Sermon on the Mount is case law—practical ethics for the believer who has to make a living in the public square. The Sermon was **not** delivered to politicians for the purpose of regulating civil government. “Turning the other cheek” is **not** legal advice to the League of Nations. Jesus was **not** giving an address on international relations in the Sermon on the Mount. Rather, he addressed life in the neighborhood—ethics for the one who has surrendered to the Rule of God—personal ethics for the person who has to make a living in the push-and-shove plaza in the competitive open market.

The Ten Commandments, on the other hand are fundamental law and have application to civil authorities. It is the life blood of a civil society. To undermine the Ten Commandments is to deny twenty centuries of Christian law and their progress. The Ten Commandments are not only good for you but good for your political representatives.

But, the application of the Ten Commandments has limitations. It cannot regenerate man or society; but, if properly applied with force of government, it can purge evil in society. The error of the Pharisees was they saw law as the means of producing an orderly society. They believed not only in the rule of law, but RULE BY LAW!!! That is, the Pharisees saw law as the means of controlling society. Jesus expanded the law to matters of heart and soul, but he did not advance God’s law as the means of saving society. What saves men is grace, **not** law; the Savior, **not** the government.

## 86. THE CALL TO SUFFER

***1 Peter 2:21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.***

Suffering is not on anyone's bucket list. Americans are in pursuit of money, ease, fun, parties, and good times. Because we underestimated the value of suffering and its purpose in our lives, American Christians unravel during times of sorrow and conflict. When suffering is under appreciated and unwelcome, Christians become superficial, trivial, hollow, and useless.

Suffering is the difference between being juvenile or mature; the difference between being shallow or deep; the difference between being weak or strong; and the difference between self-centered and a profitable servant.

*Life is suffering. Life is not resistance to suffering. The point of life is to suffer. This is why we're here: We're here to suffer. I believe in a higher power that compassionately allows suffering for us as a race, to grow and mature. Rainn Wilson*

Our Lord was a savior, teacher, prophet, shepherd, and lover of souls, but He was also a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. He was called *a root out of dry ground*, but that that little sprig of life had the cures for the ailments of all men (Isaiah 53).

Likewise, God calls us to a life of suffering, **not** to hurt us, but to build into our lives those virtues that mark holy men; that is to produce "righteousness" (2:24). Therefore, when God calls us into seasons of suffering, don't fight it. Heed the call. Accept it, and produce holiness under it.

See the **Five Calls found in 1 Peter**: the call to be saved, the call to be holy, the call to suffer, the call to love, and the call to go home to be with the Lord.

## **87. THE CALL TO LOVE GOD**

***Matthew 22:37 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.***

***See also Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27; Deuteronomy 6:4-6***

### **AN IMPORTANT QUESTION ABOVE LOVE**

On the top shelf of the great commandments stands the call to love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, strength, and might. No greater duty rests on mankind than to love the LORD our God. It is the first, foremost, primary, chief, and fundamental requirement of all men.

If loving the Lord is the greatest command, then every Christian should be interested in how to love the Lord. But, how do we know if we love the Lord? Is there a standard or a yardstick by which we can measure our love for the Lord? Is there rule to gauge the height and breadth of our devotion to God?

### **CONFUSION ABOUT LOVE**

Like a Civil War battlefield with muskets firing, canons thundering, and smoke blurring the sky, confusion about love clouds the American mind. I found this on statement on Facebook: “Love is a feeling that catch us without any warning,” and, “What does love mean? . . . Love is an incredible feeling you get . . .” When Americans talk about love, they are referring to warm, touch-feely emotions. Americans love to taste the cold terror in a horror movie, to sense goose bumps running up and down their arms in romance movie, to palpitate vicariously the of a win on the basketball floor. Oh, the joy of first love! Oh, the relief after one’s first piano recital. The initial question reporters ask a quarterback about winning the Super Bowl is “How do you feel about your performance today?” Life is about feelings, and Americans want to know how you feel about things. If you love somebody, you must feel the honey bees buzzing around in your heart. Forget thinking! Forget opinions! Tell us how you feel?

Americans love to talk about how they feel because they are in hot pursuit of warm fuzzies, ripples on the skin, and hair on the neck standing at attention. How a person feels causes the mercury in the thermometer of success to rise. The better you feel, the more successful you are. Even in the courts, the judge and jury want to know how the defendant felt at the time he committed his crime. If there was no animus in his heart, he’s not as guilty. In fact, many juries will find a defendant innocent if he has good feelings and a positive attitude toward his victim. But, if a psychologist testifies the defendant had hate in his heart at the time of his crime, he will do his time!

When it comes to religion, Americans don’t want to study it, they want to feel it. They will judge a sermon, not on its content, but on how it makes them feel. “How did you like the sermon,” deacons ask? “I felt good about,” replied the visitor. I’ll be back.” Families chose churches based on the style of music they prefer. And, they rate preachers on how well they can make you laugh or cry. The most religious among us wants to feel God, touch the face of God, snuggle up to God and feel his love from the top of their heads to the bottom of their toes. Our youth are used to watching horror movies, thriller and suspense movies, martial arts movies, action and adventure movies that evoke excitement, and they expect the same naked thrill in their church experience.

Further, when it comes to voting for candidates, poll after poll informs us that Americans, particularly the youth, vote for a candidate based on their feelings. Forget his platform or political philosophy, all that matters is how the candidate makes you feel. If you feel good about the presidential candidate, he gets your vote; if he doesn’t make you feel good, you vote for the other guy. Advertisers know this and this is why political advertisements appeal to your fears and dreams rather than stating the true facts about the candidate. Forget the facts. Make me feel good! And, students are more than likely to choose a religion that makes them feel good rather than investigating the truth of its claims.

So, when we ask, “How do you know if you love God?” the average American describes his feelings; that is, his fierce, ambient, warm tingles furiously erupting from the core of his soul. He loves God because he feels good about God or he feels bad about God, and therefore, questions the relevance of Christianity.

Even theologians are confused about love. In reading some of the literature on this subject you come up with concepts like “all your affection,” “pure emotions,” “encounter his glory,” “gaze on the face of God,” “agape unconditional love,” “be thankful for everything, past, present, and future,” “rejoicing always,” “delight in,” “with a soul-heart and spiritual heart . . . as a wellspring of life,” “with a good heart,” “loving him deeply, supremely,” “relate to Him person-to-person,” “a love relationship with him,” “to love God is a confrontation with self,” “being child-like,” and “look at everything and everybody in your heart through the lens of your first-love for him.” It’s not as though all the concepts are toxic, they are not. The problem becomes one of expectations. Many of these descriptions on love put it out of the

range of possibility. Loving God becomes so lofty and so supreme and so high no mortal can scale the mountain.

We must ask, “Is there a standard, a measuring stick which will tell us if we love God and how much we love him?” The answer is, “Yes!” There is such a standard.

### **GOD’S YARDSTICK OF LOVE**

*Galatians 6:16 And as many as walk according to this rule (kanon), peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.*

Is there a standard which we can use to test our love for God? Notice carefully the word “rule” in Galatians 6:16. It is the Greek word *kanon*. Our English word “canon” is derived from this Greek term. The word “canon” refers to “a rule, standard, criterion, or yardstick.” In our text, peace and mercy are promised to those who “walk according to this rule.”

So, what is this rule by which we can measure love? Simply this: obedience to God’s law! The man who loves God keeps his commandments, and the one who keeps his commandments loves him. There are no “warm fuzzies” crawling on this yardstick. Feelings are important in life, but untrustworthy as a measuring stick of love. Love for God can only be measured by one’s obedience to His Law-word.

### **LOVE AND OBEDIENCE**

Let’s look at the Scripture. As we investigate these verses, we ought to recognize how loving the Lord is connected to obeying his commands.

*Deuteronomy 6:1ff “Commandments . . . statutes . . . judgments . . . commanded . . . statutes . . . commandments. . . command thee . . . observe . . . Hear, Oh Israel, the LORD our God is one. And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*

Note the context of the Shema! Moses links obedience to God’s commands with love.

*Deuteronomy 30:16, 20 In that I command thee this day **to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments.** . . . That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days . . .*

Again, notice how obeying his voice and keeping his commandments is a direct reflection of one’s love for Christ. The man who loves God walks in his ways. He permits all God’s law to govern him.

*1 John 5:2-3 By this we know that we love the children of God, **when we love God, and keep his commandments.** For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*

How do we love God in this text? Notice we love God by keeping his commandments. When we love God we listen to his commands and obey them. When we obey his Law-word, we love the children of God. Love for God is expressed in our love for members of his family.

*Romans 13:10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore **love is the fulfilling of the law.***

Notice that love is not a feeling. The one who loves God keeps his law. Law keeping is the best way to measure one's love for Christ. You love your neighbor by not stealing from him, envying him, lying to him, or lusting after his stuff.

*1 John 2:3-4 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

This verse tells us that those who know God keep his commandments. If a man says he knows God and loves God, but does not obey him, the man is liar! Liars say one thing and do another. Liars make promises, but do not keep them. Obedience is the canon of love.

Notice the following verses reinforce the fact that obedience to God's commands is the standard by which we can measure our love for him.

*John 15:10 If ye keep my **commandments**, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's **commandments**, and abide in his love.*

*John 15:12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

*1 John 2:3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his **commandments**.*

*See also: 1 John 2:4; 1 John 3:24; 1 John 5:2; Deuteronomy 5:33; Exodus 19:5;*

## **LOVE AND STUDY**

Since obedience to God's commandments is the means and measure of how much we love the Lord, it is only reasonable that the lover of God will read, investigate, and study the Word of God; that is, one's relationship to the Bible exposes his love for God whether it be much or little. Those in hot pursuit of the living God have a "quiet time," devotions, and Bible readings.

*Job 23:12 Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.*

*Psalms 1:1-2 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

*Psalms 119:97 O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.*

*Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.*

*Jeremiah 15:16 Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.*

## **LOVE GUARDS LAW**

The Shema teaches that there is One, absolute, unchanging God and one, absolute unchanging law. The infinite, personal, triune Spirit Who created the world is man's only Source of law!! The opposite of one

God, One Lawgiver, and one law is polytheism and multiculturalism. The premise of polytheism is that we live in a multi-universe with a variety of law orders with many lords and many gods; that there is no absolute God and therefore one absolute law-order. Relativism and lawlessness are the result of multiculturalism.

The First Commandment, if it means anything, calls men to reject competing law sources. Absolute law cannot recognize any alien law order as valid for Christians or FOR ANYONE ELSE in that society. Pluralism pollutes and divides. For this reason, politicians encourage multiculturalism. Because there is One God, there is ONE TRUTH and only ONE LAW SYSTEM that is valid. Since gods are the source of law, and sense the source of law is the god of that society, all man-made systems are repugnant to God's Law-order. When permissive men make "law" they protect sin; and, their penal system against violators becomes cruel and unreasonable—the U.S. prison system with twenty-year sentences for non-violent offenses being an example.

Thus, the First Commandment required civil leaders to protect its Source of law. Absolute law recognizes no law but the law of the LORD God. Capital punishment was applied to revolutionaries who sought to undermine Israel's law Source and supplant it with pragmatic laws of other gods (Deuteronomy 13). Toleration of alien law was an act of treason to Israel's King. Basic to the health of any society is the protection of its legal foundations. Those devoted to God esteem God's law and protect it from being polluted by man-made legal systems.

*Psalm 94:20 Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?*

*2 Kings 17:7 For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods,*

*2 Kings 17:8 And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.*

*Colossians 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.*

*Colossians 2:20-22 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?*

*See also: Titus 1:14; Ephesians 5:11; Acts 5:28; Acts 5:29*

## **THE NATURE OF LOVE**

Love is not a warm-fuzzy feeling. Biblical love requires action and is always demonstrative. Love is not a dreamy feeling . . . or mushy emotion . . . or saccharine sentimentality. Love fleshes itself out in positive, tangible demonstrations of goodness. Like there is no such thing as a disembodied spirit, there is no such thing as disembodied love. Faith must express itself in action or it is not true faith. Love must be seen, touched, handled, and heard. Love must have arms and legs. Biblical theology requires Biblical applications. What is not practiced is not postulated. Notice how love demonstrates itself by actions in the following texts.

*Deuteronomy 26:17 Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice:*

*Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

*1 John 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

*1 John 3:17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*

*1 John 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*

*1 John 4:9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*

Likewise our love for God must be demonstrated. When “profession of love without obedience” creeps out of the graveyard of Dead Faith you have a lot of smoke and no fire (James 2:17).

Love requires all-hands on deck. God’s way of calling the crew to duty is to command them to love him with all their capacities: heart, mind, soul, strength, and might. Terms like “heart” and “mind” and “soul” and “strength” refers to one’s personal faculties. “Might” refers to one’s material assets (See 1 Chronicles 29:1-2).

### **HOW DO I KNOW I LOVE THE LORD**

*1 John 5:2-3 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*

God needs nothing from us. He is a great King and his storehouses are full. We can add nothing to his coffers. But, we can be His instruments of love by caring his people.

When I love my brothers and sisters in Christ, I am loving the Lord. When I see one of them in need, and have the means to help, but restrain my gifts, how can I say that I love the Lord?

When I honor my parents, speak well of them, assist them in their duties, and help them financially in their old age, I love the Lord. If I do not obey them in my youth or honor them when they are old, how can I say that I love God?

When I love my wife as Christ loved the church, I love the Lord. When I speak tenderly to her and honor her, I love the Lord. Likewise, when my wife submits to me and respects me and assist me in my life work, she loves the Lord.

When I work to earn money to care for my family, I love the Lord. Work is a commandment and obedience to it is a blessing to all of society.

When I study God’s Word and obey his commandments, I love the Lord. But, if I disobey his law, how can I say that I love God?

## **PROOF WE LOVE THE LORD**

In court, cases are all about proof of claim. If we had to go to court to prove we love Christ, would there be enough evidence to convict us. Notice how actions prove we love Him. It is not our feelings about God that matter, but keeping his commands.

*Deuteronomy 26:17 You have declared today that the LORD is your God, and that you will walk in his ways, and keep his statutes and his commandments and his rules, and will obey his voice.*

*Hebrews 6:10 For God is not so unjust as **to overlook your work and the love that you showed** for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do.*

*Matthew 25:40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'*

## **LOVE HATES EVIL**

The antithesis of love is hate. Just as it is not possible to say you love sunshine and stand in the shadows, it is not possible to love God without hating evil. Biblical love discriminates against evil men. Evil does not exist in the environment, it resides in people! Like love is demonstrable, evil is demonstrable. Just as love expresses itself by keeping God's commandments, evil expresses itself by disobeying his commandments. Evil can be recognized by willful injury to men or their property. When men abuse the rights of people, evil has expressed itself. It is not enough to love the sinner and hate the sin, Christians are called to hate God's enemies committed to manufacturing evil and multiplying misery among humanity.

*2 Chronicles 19:2 But Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the LORD.*

*Psalms 139:21 Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?*

*Psalms 97:10 O you who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the lives of his saints; he delivers them from the hand of the wicked.*

*Psalms 119:113 I hate those who are double-minded, But I love Thy law.*

*Psalms 119:163 I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love.*

In summary, how do we love the Lord? God gave us a yardstick. Don Francisco had it right, "Love is not a feeling; it is an act of the will." We love the Lord by keeping his commandments. When we obey his Law-word, we fulfill the requirement of love. Love is the practice of law and the practical expression of one's Christian faith; i.e. God's children keep his household rules. And, when Christians obey the Father's rules, everyone benefits.

## **THE CALL TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER**

Love is the fulfillment of law; that is, when a man obeys God's law, he loves his neighbor. When men neglect God's law, there is trouble in the home . . . and on the street. Love knows what is good and does it. Love establishes rules and expects rules to be obeyed. Love knows how to respond to obedience and



disobedience. The most loving among us knows God's law and keeps it! In contrast, the permissive, licentious man shows contempt for God's law. The antinomian man in the name of grace destroys love because he is hostile to God's household rules, has low expectations of people, and rarely encourages discipline in the home or the church.

*Romans 13:10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore **love is the fulfilling of the law.***

God loves because of Who He is, a God of love; that is, God loves because it is in His nature to do so. Likewise, we love because of who we are and what we are becoming, a people of love. God's seed abides in every Christian. It is natural for the Christian to express love and kindness.

God's love is governed and balanced by His other attributes. It never degenerates into permissiveness. It never degenerates into a mushy, ooey gooey, sappy tolerance towards misbehavior. It is never undiscerning nor does His love lack discipline. His love knows what is best for His children and acts for their good. Because the LORD God loved Israel, He gave them His law. They received Ten Commandments, not Ten Suggestions; that is, God established the rules of His home and expected His children to keep them. Because He loves His children, He disciplines them for their improvement.

Man, however, talks a lot about love but appears to be confused about the subject. Men seem to have difficulty discerning the difference between love and lust, kindness and cruelty; action and feelings; patience and permissiveness. Love must be governed by moral standards: "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil" (Proverbs 8:13). Love and hate go hand-in-hand. It is impossible to love unless a man knows the difference between good and evil. In the name of unconditional love, many a parent has spoiled the child and reaped the whirlwind. A parent with low expectations for self-control and maturity rarely discipline their children. A home without rules and discipline lacks love. Thus, the Christian must know the difference between indulgent, permissive, lenient, inconsistent attitudes and love that has expectation, rules, and discipline. For this reason, the Bible says love is a "fulfilling of the law;" that is, love knows what is good and does it! Love discerns evil and avoids it!

## **RELATIONSHIPS AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

When an individual makes a decision to come under the rule of God in Christ, he receives the life of the kingdom. He soon discovers that he is not alone, but that others also have come to share the powers of the age to come. This discovery creates a fellowship, a family with a common life. The most important relationship is with God Himself, but that relationship is not disconnected to the King's people. God calls believers to a life of love—but not indiscriminate love. Love must be guided by law not by feelings. When relationships are guided by emotions, neighbors end up in People's Court. When families lack love, sparks fly.

## **LOVE AND GOD'S PEOPLE**

Christianity demands a relationship with God and His people. It is not a religious program run on engineering principles or mathematical formulas. It is governed by relationship principles. Further, we do not own Christ alone; we own him together with all believers—even the ornery ones. But, unfortunately divisions and schisms are a sad part of church history. Needless factions occur in part because Christians are not mature in love. ***Our basis of fellowship is not light (100 % correct doctrine) nor love (100 % tolerance), but the common life we share in Christ. If we base our fellowship on permissive "love," we tend to tolerate unacceptable behavior; when we base our fellowship on light, we tend to be separate from***

those who disagree with us. But, if we base our fellowship on the common life we share with other believers, we have grounds of fellowship.

Anthony Groves explained this to J.N. Darby, one of the most charismatic, doctrinally orientated men the world has ever known. J.N. Darby is credited with influencing the start of at least 1400 churches as well as splitting 700 of them. He was a stickler for doctrine and had little tolerance for differences. From Darby's point of view, his interpretations were spiritual and everyone else's interpretations were carnal. In the 1800s, J. N. Darby was instrumental in starting hundreds of Plymouth Brethren Churches. Over the course of time, he began to attack any all who did not see eye-to-eye with him. Anthony Groves believed the same "church" principles as Darby, but was more educated in grace. In seeking to correct the divisiveness among the Plymouth Brethren, Groves iterated the following:

*Your union daily becoming one of doctrine and opinion more than life and love . . . your Shibboleth may be different, but it will be as real.*

*Your little bodies have undergone, in no longer standing forth the witnesses for the glorious and simple truth, so much as standing forth witnesses against all that they judge error,*

*The moment the witnessing for the common life as our bond gives place to a witnessing against errors by separation of persons and preaching . . . the most narrow-minded and bigoted will rule, because his conscience cannot and will not give way, and therefore the more enlarged heart must yield.*

*I feel some little flocks are fast tending, if they have not already attained it, making light not life the measure of communion.*

*Was not the principle we laid down as to separation from all existing bodies at the outset, this: that we felt ourselves bound to separate from all individuals and systems, so far as they required us to do what our consciences would not allow, or restrained us from doing what our consciences required, and no further? and were we not as free to join and act with any individual, or body of individuals, as they were free not to require us to do what our consciences did not allow, or prevent our doing what they did? and in this freedom did we not feel brethren should not force liberty on those who were bound, nor withhold freedom from those who were free?*

*As any system is in its provision narrower or wider than the truth, I either stop short, or go beyond its provisions, but I would infinitely rather bear with all their evils, than separate from their good.*

*. . . We had resolved never to try to get men to act in uniformity further than they felt in uniformity;*

*You must stand before their unbiassed judgment as evidently wishing to allow in them more than their own consciences allow, rather than less, proving that your heart of love is more alive to find a covering for faults, than your eagle eye of light to discover them.*

*. I make use of my fellowship in the Spirit, to enjoy the common life together, and witness for that, as an opportunity to set before them those little particulars into which, notwithstanding all their grace and faithfulness, their godliness and honesty – they have fallen. Nor shall I ever feel separation from the good for the sake of the evil, to be my way of witnessing against it, till I see infinitely clearer than I do now, that it is God's. (Excerpts in a letter by Anthony Groves to John Nelson Darby, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1836).*

### **ETHICS APPLIED TO RELATIONSHIPS**

- Living under the rule of God means living among God's people serving Christ together. This "togetherness" is friction producing and this is where the rule of Christ must first be applied:
- God's rule means stewardship over our spirit: humbly, gently, and patiently (Ephesians 4:1-3).
- God's rule means stewardship over our bodies (Ephesians 4:17ff).
- God's rule means stewardship over our emotions (Ephesians 4:25ff).
- Follow his example (Romans 15:1-7): Accept one another.

### **KINGDOM ETHICS AND RELATIONSHIPS**

- With the children of darkness (Ephesians 5:1ff).
- With the church (Ephesians 5:19ff).
- With husbands and wives (Ephesians 5:25ff).
- With children and parents (Ephesians 6:1-4).
- With employers and employees (Ephesians 6:5ff).
- With the kingdom of darkness (Ephesians 6: 10ff).

### **PRINCIPLES OF KINGDOM RELATIONSHIPS**

**Integrity:** Integrity is faithfulness, the ability to be trusted. Without integrity, every relationship experiences frustration.

**Trust:** In kingdom life, we find ourselves locked into relationships and to gifts within the body. We must trust others in order to serve God and to reap the benefits of kingdom life.

### **RULES FOR LIFE IN AN EVIL WORLD**

The rule of yielding preference: (Romans 15:1-7)

*Romans 15:1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

The rule of edification:

*Romans 15:2 Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification.*

The rule of example:

*Romans 15:3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*

The rule of the Word:

*Romans 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

The rule of unity:

*Romans 15:5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus.*

The rule of the ultimate objective:

*Romans 15:6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The rule of acceptance:

*Romans 15:7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God’.*

The rule of law: that is, the law defines love.

*Romans 13:10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

## **ONE ANOTHERING**

Negatively:

*Galatians 5:15 But if ye bite and devour<sup>76</sup> one another, take heed that ye be not consumed<sup>77</sup> one of another.*

*Galatians 5:26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory<sup>78</sup>, provoking<sup>79</sup> one another, envying one another.*

*Titus 3:3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish<sup>80</sup>, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice<sup>81</sup> and envy, hateful, and hating one another.*

Positively:

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<sup>76</sup> The word “devour” is the Greek word for “eat” (katesqi,w) and it used of the birds eating up the scattered seed in Matthew 13:4. Paul is explaining cannibalism in the church or a cancerous condition in the body. When cancer cells are at work in the body, sick cells eat up healthy cells. Likewise, the body of Christ becomes cancerous when sick Christians devour healthy Christians with dainty morsels of gossip.

<sup>77</sup> The word “consume” (avnalwqh/te) means “to be destroyed” like fire consumes flesh (Luke 9:54).

<sup>78</sup> “Vainglory” refers to the spirit of pride that manifest itself in boasting and self-aggrandizing.

<sup>79</sup> “Provoking” (prokalou,menoi) refers to deliberate acts designed to irritate and provoke anger.

<sup>80</sup> The word “foolish” is a reference to ignorance (avno,htoi).

<sup>81</sup> The word “malice” (kaki,a|) is a general reference to “evil” or “trouble” or “badness.”

*Romans 12:10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring<sup>82</sup> one another.*

*Romans 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.*

*Romans 14:13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock<sup>83</sup> or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.*

*Romans 15:7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.<sup>84</sup>*

*Romans 15:14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish<sup>85</sup> one another.<sup>86</sup>*

*Romans 16:16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.*

*Ephesians 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness,<sup>87</sup> with longsuffering<sup>88</sup>, forbearing<sup>89</sup> one another in love.*

*Ephesians 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving<sup>90</sup> one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

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<sup>82</sup> The word “preferring” (prohgou,menoi) means “to lead.” Perhaps, it is a reference to an eagerness to show honor and respect to others for their worth and achievements.

<sup>83</sup> A stumbling block is a metaphor for tempting others where they are most vulnerable.

<sup>84</sup> The cultural clash in the new messianic community between Jews and Gentiles threatened to rip the Roman congregation apart. Paul was addressing the dominant free Romans who had difficulty accepting their “legalistic,” “constipated” Jewish brethren. In Romans 15 Paul argues that if Christ laid aside his preferences (15:3), received the weak (15:7), and made Himself a servant to the entangled Jew, the Gentiles should do the same. Paul, however, is not suggesting that Gentiles conform to the most narrow-minded and restricted brethren in the church, but to love them and receive them in spite of themselves.

<sup>85</sup> The phrase “able to admonish” (duna,menoi kai. avllh,louj nouqetei/n) is the Greek phrase from which “nouthetic counseling” was coined. *Nouthetic counseling* does not refer to “probing” the spirit, but to biblical instruction, admonishment, teaching, and warning.

<sup>86</sup> One should note Paul’s positive view of the people of God. He does not say they are full of sin, but that they are full of goodness. He could not be this positive if the regenerative powers of the gospel were not at work in the flock.

<sup>87</sup> The word “meekness” (prau<thtoj) refers to self restraint; i.e., a gentle, gracious spirit.

<sup>88</sup> The word “longsuffering” (makroqumi,aj) refers to emotional self restraint; i.e., bridling one’s passions, words, and actions so as not offend or irritate others.

<sup>89</sup> The word “forbearing” is translated “put up with you” in Matthew 17:17. Tolerance is in view, but not license.

<sup>90</sup> The word “forgiving” (carizo,menoi) means “to be gracious toward.” It can be translated “good” or “give” or “forgive” or “pardon.”

*Colossians 3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye (Ephesians 4:32)<sup>91</sup>*

*1 Thessalonians 5:11 Wherefore comfort<sup>92</sup> yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.*

*Hebrews 3:13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

*Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke<sup>93</sup> unto love and to good works.*

*Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

*1 John 3:11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*

In conclusion, the proclamation of the gospel demands a response. Repentance and faith are the primary responses that bring salvation to the soul. Faith results in justification and obedience results in sanctification. The one who follows Christ will find himself locked into human relationships that demand trust and integrity. When we are trust worthy, we are a blessing to people. When we are untrustworthy people are hurt. When we trust, we receive the benefits of fellowship. Ethics, therefore, are the result of submission to the rule of Christ. Though applied imperfectly, kingdom ethics are the standard for behavior in this present age.

## **GOING DEEPER INTO LOVE (1 Corinthians 13)**

A friend expressed his aggravation about a series of sermons in his church. So, I asked him why he was so upset with the messages. He said, “I am tired of being chewed out every Sunday.” Immediately, I knew exactly what he meant. In an effort to make a church better, some preachers believe they have to tell people how bad they are. Some feel that if they beat the sheep hard enough, they will improve. The more they yell, the better the congregation will be. In my friend’s case, he felt beat up and unloved. No man can live without love. We can survive without nice houses and fancy cars, but we cannot be happy without love.

Next to holiness, love is the most beautiful flower in God’s garden of virtues. He loves, not because of who we are, but because of Who He is—a God of love. Let us consider God’s love and the character of love from 1 Corinthians 13. In this chapter Paul shines the light on the on the individual pedals of God’s love

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<sup>91</sup> The standard of forgiveness is Christ. If Christ has forgiven our many sins, surely we can forgive a brother’s few sins against us.

<sup>92</sup> “Comfort” is not a good translation. The Greek word *parakalei/te* should be translated “exhort” or “instill courage.” The idea here is not giving “comfort” “to the wounded,” but calling others to responsibility even though they may feel hurt and wounded.

<sup>93</sup> The word “provoke” (*paroxusmo.n*) means “to sharpen.” We get the English word *paroxysm* from this word which means “a sudden attack” or “outburst” of laughing or sneezing or spasm.

You can glorify God in your life by enjoying God's love for you.

## **LOVE IS PATIENT**

Have you ever considered how patient God is with you? The word “patient” is a translation of the Greek word “macrothumia” which means “long suffering.” It refers to being long in spirit and slow to lose heart. It is the ability to count down before blasting off.

If we are wrapped up in performance-based theology, we may believe that God is agitated with us. If we think God is impatient with us, we tend to be demanding on others. We honk the horn in traffic, speed down the highway, rush from store to store, anxiously watch the clock, and blow our cool when meetings are not on time. But, God is not like this. He is never in a rush. He is not in a hurry. He does not blow his stack when we fail.

Patience is different than mercy in that the latter shows goodness to the weak. But patience shows mercy toward the undeserving; that is,

Patience is a gift of God weaved into the soul by the Holy Spirit and trained in the school of suffering and heart ache. But the patience of God is a perfected attribute of His being, a part of His nature. So perfect is his patience that it needs no discipline to refine it. He can never improve it. He can never lose it. We can never exhaust it. His patience is infinite and unfathomable. He is l o o o n g suffering toward us Do we believe it? Our unbelief cannot bankrupt his patience, but it can rob us of enjoying it (Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:18; Psalm 86:15; Psalm 103:8).

Think for a moment how patient God is with us. God is not only patient with us when we are weak, but when we are wrong. Peter tells us that God “waited” in the days of Noah. One hundred and twenty years God endured the rebels that either ignored Him or taunted Him. Paul tells us He endured with much patience the vessels of wrath (Romans 9:22). Have you ever watched a little girl thread a needle? As she misses the eye of the needle, aren't you tempted to take that needle and thread it yourself? But, God is not tempted to take the needle and thread it himself. He knows there is value in struggling and that we would never grow if He interrupted that process. In all our struggles, God is longsuffering toward us. Let us imitate Him.

## **LOVE IS KIND**

Kindness is a near-kinsmen of love. It is that gentleness of spirit that has compassion on the suffering. Kindness has beautiful eyes that look past our flaws; beautiful lips that anoint the soul with grace; beautiful hands that guide and comfort. His kindness knows no limits, no boundaries, and no selfishness: “But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy” (Titus 3:4-5). He is the Rescuer that risked His life to entered the cold prison, to unlock our iron chains, and to lead us past the armed-guards, past the prison gates to place of safety and warmth (Matthew 12:28).

Some people are mean-spirited. I know of a collegiate wrestler who carried a box of nails in his front seat. When an oncoming car did not dim its lights, he would grab a handful of nails and throw them out the window. God is not like this, of course. Though it is His duty is to judge evil, judgment is called his “strange work” (Isaiah 28:1).

One time when General Robert E. Lee was fleeing from advancing Yankee troops, he dismounted his horse and calmly walked over to a nearby tree, picked up a baby bird, placed it gently back in its nest, walked back to his horse, mounted it, and fled like lightening to avoid being hit by thundering musket fire. In this act, Lee was so much like the Savior.

Dr. Hunter McGuire, Stonewall Jackson's personal physician during the Civil War, noted about Jackson,

*As I look back on the two years that I was daily, indeed hourly, with him, his gentleness as a man, his great kindness, is tenderness to those in trouble and affliction . . . impressed me more than his wonderful prowess as a great warrior."*

At a wedding the Lord Jesus used his power to provide the finest of wine (a luxury) to a poor bride and groom when only days before He would not use His power in the wilderness to provide the necessities of life for Himself. Christ is good, the greatest good, and the standard of good. He is kind to all His creatures, great and small, rich and poor (Psalm 119:68). He causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust. He gives us all good things to enjoy. Surely, if He withholds something from us, it must be for a greater good.

### **LOVE DOES NOT ENVY**

Envy is like an ulcer caused by the inflammation of the "wish" bone. Love looks through a telescope; envy looks through a microscope. Though we live so much better than the Savior, our Lord has no envy of us. We have huge homes. But, Jesus said, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nest, but the Son of man has no place to lay his head." We have closets full of clothes, but Jesus only had one garment. We have comfortable, padded shoes, but Jesus walked thousands of miles in a pair of sandals. Every day, we drive around in nice comfortable cars, but Jesus rode on a donkey, and that only once. Jesus' diet was limited to wheat and barley and a small variety of food common to the Mediterranean. But, we enjoy European delights, French delicacies, Mexican food, Chinese wonder dishes, Texas size steaks, and the American Hamburger. He had no opiate in His death, yet very few of us will die without morphine. Not only does He not envy us for our luxuries, it is He Who provides these things for us to enjoy. The One who would not use his power to command stones to be made into bread to satisfy his own hunger, used his power to change water into wine as a luxury to enjoy for the Bride and Groom at the Wedding of Cana.

### **LOVE IS NOT PROUD**

The word "vaunt" means "to boast." The success of boasters not only goes to their head, but also to their mouth. Jesus, however, is not a boaster. Though He was God and had much to brag about, He was the most humble of men. He was God on earth, yet only a handful of people knew about His birth. He was a member of a royal family, yet he was raised in the hillbilly country of northern Israel. He was a king, but He was known as a carpenter's son. He owned the cattle on a thousand hills, yet owned only one garment. He was God Almighty, the Son of God, but was called a "Samaritan." He commanded angels, yet forbid any of them from rescuing Him from cruel cross congested with pain and suffering.

If God loved Jacob who was called a worm (Isaiah 41:14), surely he loves us. Sometimes we feel as insignificant as a maggot, but God loves small creatures like us and is not ashamed to be our God. His love is not proud.

### **LOVE DOES NOT BEHAVE IMPROPERLY**



Americans have notoriously poor table manners. We are an embarrassment to the British and considered unsophisticated by the Chinese. We slurp our soup, chomp our cookies, spill our salt, and belch over a good meal. And while all this slurping, chomping, spilling, and belching can be seen as quaintly humorous, we are no longer living in little wooden shacks in the Ozarks where we prop up our feet on the table and scoot aside to make room for our nineteen cats, dogs, and pet pigs.

It was said of Stonewall Jackson, “Jackson’s personal character was absolutely without blemish. His habits were the manliest that a Puritan could wish, his honor clean, and his courage superlative; while as a gentleman in expression and action, he had no superior.” (James I. Robertson, 2002, p. 94).

General Lee had one rule at Washington College: “Every student must learn to be a gentlemen.” Being a gentlemen to Lee was never more tested than when the strong have power over the weak, magistrate over the citizen, employer over the employed, the educated over the unlettered, the experienced over the naïve, and the clever over the silly—the forbearing or inoffensive use of power and authority reveals the gentleman in pure light (Richard G. Williams, 2002, p. p. 50)

The word “proper” means suitable to a purpose. Propriety stays within a purpose. This is another way to say that our Lord is a perfect gentleman in His dealings with us. He has absolute power over you and me, yet He is not harsh or course with us. He is not a tyrant or a dictator, nor is He crude and rude. He does not misuse His power or position. As Lord, He behaves like a king. As a Savior, He is always good and heroic. As our Head, He is always stately. He never raises His voice when a quiet word will do. In all His dealings with us, He is always the Royal Gentleman.

### **LOVE SEEKETH NOT HER OWN**

Perhaps you have heard of the man who did not like to read books because reading took his mind off himself. A man who is all wrapped in himself is overdressed. When on earth, Jesus served humanity. When He spoke, it was to encourage His sheep. When He was quiet, it was for the benefit of people. The Scripture tells us that, “He daily loads us with benefits.” His miracles were performed for the good of men, but not once did He perform a miracle to meet His own need. There was no water, or food, or comfort on the cross, yet He went there for you and me. Even at this very hour, Jesus seeks your best, your edification, and your success. Even now, “all things are working together for good to those who love God and are called by His purpose” (Romans 8:28). This is not to say everything that happens to us is good. But in evil times, He is at work bringing good out of evil.

### **LOVE IS NOT EASILY PROVOKED**

The word “*provoked*” means “sharp.” The word “*easy*” is not in the text. Love is plain not provoked. It does not stick you. It has no daggers. It doesn’t chop you in pieces and expect you to sew yourself up.

We are easily offended and agitated because we are not perfected in love. Our family members immediately know when we are irritated. They are familiar with our tirades when we are miffed. Our frowns and flared nostrils reveal our imperfections.

Are you familiar with the word, “knucklehead?” It refers to a youth who does such stupid things that his parents knuckle him in the skull to get his attention when he misbehaves. When our sins come before God, He doesn’t get emotional. He doesn’t knock us in the side of the head to get our attention. We are not thumped when He is angry with us. Further, He does not call us knuckleheads, but beloved children.

Though He may discipline us for our good, He does not tie us to the masthead and whip us to our humiliation before our peers.

We are easily provoked because we have high expectation of people. It was said of General Lee that He did not expect men to be better than they are, because he understood original sin. He did not expect perfection from his men (though he did expect obedience and excellence). He did not lose heart when the odds appeared to be against Him. He trusted in providence to turn things right because the Word of God taught Him to hope—and no Christian should be bereft of hope (The Maxims of Robert E. Lee, p. xix).

### **LOVE DOES NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT A WRONG SUFFERED**

The word “*account*” is a business term. It refers to record keeping. Too many of us are in the business of keeping lists of wrongs suffered. We can remember in great detail every offense against us. When our mate offends us, they are likely not only to hear about the recent incident, but be reminded all the times they injured us.

Not only do we keep lists of wrongs, we withdraw love when we are hurt. When wronged our well of love runs dry. Not so with Christ. When hurt by our sin, His galvanized love blurted out, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

Because we keep records of wrong, some of us see God as a Sin Accountant. “Ah ha, you did it again!” We see Him as the Great Record Keeper in the Sky making lists of sins, which He intends to punish at the right time. But, our God does not keep records. He does not make lists. He does not keep score. In fact, the Scripture tells us, “He does not remember our sins and iniquities” (Hebrews 10:17). God is not the Great Record Keeper, but the Great Forgetter.

### **LOVE DOES NOT REJOICE IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, BUT REJOICES IN THE TRUTH**

The media has learned that bad news sells more newspapers than good news.

Because some members of our race delight in cutting off the heads of their enemies, we may think God derives some sadistic pleasure from our pain. Not only does God not take pleasure in our suffering, He does not rejoice in the judgment of the wicked. Have you ever noticed how many movies are about sweet revenge where the bad guy gets what he deserves in the end, or where a mafia figure gets gunned down, or a cruel mate dies from his own weapon? We love to see sweet revenge, but He is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 2:9). While His holiness demands justice, His love and grace aches to be expressed in kindness—even to His enemies.

The human eye is the most sensitive part of the human body. Even a hair in the eye can inflict excruciating pain. The Scripture tells us that He who touches you touches the apple of His eye (Zechariah. 2:8). Even the hairs of our head are numbered. Though we are often confused by His silence, He takes no pleasure in our pain and heartaches.

God loves truth and hates deceit. We love playing tricks on one another. The bank robber who has mastered deceit and escapes with tons of cash intrigues us. God, on the other hand, is not a trickster. He does not play holy pranks on people. He does not turn people into toads. He loves truth because He knows that lies ruin people. He is totally redemptive in His purposes and He plans nothing except for our good.

### **LOVE BELIEVES ALL THINGS**

We know that we are to believe in God, but do we know that God believes in us? As a father, I would go to every game or concert or choir performance where my children were involved. I was the zealous father in the stands yelling and screaming and pulling for my children. Do you think God is any different? He wants us to succeed. He wants our marriages to be successful. He wants us to be happy parents. He wants us to do well in school. He is the great Cheerleader in Heaven wanting the very best for us.

He is called “the God of Jacob” (Psalm 20:1). God helped him when all others used him. God made him rich when his enemies tried to steal from him. God freed him when others tried to trap him. In his death, the man nobody loved receive more respect and more honor than any other man in the Bible (See Genesis 50). If you are discouraged, let your faith tap into this truth: “This I know, that God is for me” (Psalm 56:9).

### **LOVE HOPES ALL THINGS**

Hope is a virtue that swings into action when all visible signs of support have vanished. God is the Great Hoper. Even when we show no signs of cooperation with His plan, God hopes. He hopes we will succeed, that we will obey, that we will do what is right. God simply loves us and can do nothing else. He is a God who never stops seeking us. God is good and never forsakes us whatever difficulties may arise (Hebrews 13:5).

Before Abraham had left Mesopotamia or obeyed his voice or had a child, the Great Hoper said, "I will bless you ... and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:2-3).

Saint Paul's understanding is clear: "Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Romans 5:5). Far from being a simple wish for the future with no guarantee that it will occur, the Christian hope rests on the presence of divine love in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance -- that current of life that carries us to the ocean of His love in Christ.

### **LOVE ENDURES ALL THINGS**

The word “endure” or “bears” comes from the Greek word *stego*. It refers to a thatch or roof or covering of a building. In its root form *stego* means to cover closely, to protect by covering and then, to conceal and then, by covering, to bear up under. At the core *stego* denotes an activity or state which blocks entry from without or exit from within. This is a love that protects or conceals from injury. Moffatt translate the word “slow to expose.”

Some of us need enduring. We are hard to live with. Many of us are cranky and crotchety. Getting close to us is like trying to squeeze a cactus. We give up on people because they are not easy to love. Though we are as rough as sand paper and as course as a carpenter's file, God does not give up on us—even his ornery children. Nothing can separate us from His love (Romans 8: 30ff). All the verbs here are in the present tense. He endures our sins, our weaknesses, our failures, our temper tantrums, our skepticism, our unbelief, our fits of sensuality, our arrogance, and our stupidity NOW! He protects and does not expose our inner most weaknesses to those who would use information against us. His perfect love endures all our human imperfections. It knows when to be silent; when to make allowances; when to defend; when to set free; and when to shore up weaknesses. It always looks for the best. Never looks back. Encourages us to go forward and shields us from that which would harm us.

For this reasons husbands protect their wives and wives keep secrets. For this reason, Christians despise gossip and hate slander. Love endures. Love shields. Love sets up rules for children and protects lambs from wolves.

## LOVE NEVER FAILS

Despite what we think this say, *love does fail!* Many a son has rejected the unfailing, persistent love a loyal father. Many a darling has walked away from true love. Having done the best they could to win a heart, many a beau has been rejected. Our prisons are full of people who did not respond to love.

When the text says that love never fails, it is not talking about results, but the source and supply. God's love does not fail. His well of love does not run dry. His love does not have a shut off valve. It does not stumble. It does not stagger. Because God's reservoir of agape springs from the artesian well of eternal grace. His love is exhaustless and unending. He is totally committed to love us when we are good and when we are bad; that is, in dealing with us, God does not fail by choosing to love us. In taking the path of love in shepherding us, God does not fail. We may quit on God, but God will not give up on us. He will love us to the very end (John 13:1).

When the text say that love never fails, the apostle is telling us that in loving, we will never be on the wrong course. The path of Biblical love is always the right trail marker. Love discerns good and evil. Love does what is best according to the standard of God's law and God's goodness. Our love may not achieve the intended results, but in love we have achieved. Love is a fulfillment of the law and when we love, we are doing the will of God.

In conclusion, John Piper reminded us that *God is never more glorified than when we delight in Him.* We are sometimes asked to do more and be better, but somehow with the eyes of faith, we need to grasp the unfailing love of God for us when we aren't better and haven't done more. God is not a groupie. He loves us individually, warts and all. We will indeed be better and do more, but not until we understand how much we are loved and accepted by Him.

Let us not forget that God can give without loving, but God did not love without giving. When we are tempted to doubt God's love in the midst of our trials, let us remember that God so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son for us. When we trust Him, we can enjoy that love more and more.

## FIVE WAYS TO LOVE DIFFERENT PEOPLE

*1 Thessalonians 5 11-15 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.*

Love is seldom "sugar and spice and everything nice." Because human needs are different, love must be packaged in different ways. Note the five kinds of love actions mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15.

- **Towards pastoral leadership:** “Know them which labor among you.” That is, perceive their work and esteem its importance. Honor, respect, cooperate, and assist spiritual leaders.
- **Towards the unruly:** Warn them. The term “unruly” means “out of order,” or “out of step.” It refers to the rebellious, stubborn, and recalcitrant. Love warns and exhorts the mutinous to redirect their course, to do an about-face, and to judge their willfulness.
- **Towards the fainthearted:** Encourage them. The fainthearted are the fearful. The fearful are easily discouraged, easily give up, and easily flee at the first sign of conflict. These people need to be infused with courage.
- **Towards the weak:** Strengthen them. Some people are burdened down by health and financial troubles. These people need assistance; i.e. practical help in their trials.
- **Towards the difficult:** Be patient with them. Some people are all cockleburs and thorns. They manage to irritate everyone around them. These people turn molehills into mountains and are so slow in getting things done. They are not necessarily on the wrong path, they are always playing catch up. They need patience.

## 88. THE CALL TO CONFRONT

Occasionally, a church is called to discipline its members. Quality and purity of the church is important. A church that stresses numbers and growth without disciplining erring members violates the intent of Scripture. A church without rules and discipline lacks love. When a believer is trapped in a serious sin, Matthew 18: 15-20 is the model provided by our Lord.

*If your brother sins . . .*

Do not run from the responsibility of confronting your sinning brother. God has shown you his sin so you, out of love, can help restore him to Christ.

**STEP ONE:** Go to your brother alone and confront *him* (or her). Do not go to your pastor. Step one may take several conversations.

If your brothers acknowledges his sin and forsakes it, you have won your brother. Do not share the sin with anyone else. Keep it between the two of you.

If your brother does not respond to your confrontation, go to step two.

**STEP TWO:** Take another brother (consider a deacon) or two with you to verify what is true, and confront your brother again. Determine the facts!

If your brother responds, confesses and forsakes his sin, you have won your brother. Do not share the sin with anyone else. Keep it between the three of you. Do not tell your spouse!

If your brother does not respond to this effort, then go to step three.

**STEP THREE:** If you have taken step one and two and you have clear evidence your brother has committed a serious sin worthy of church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:11), then inform the pastor or a deacon of the church. Godly leadership will make an effort to confront the sinning brother in order to restore him to fellowship with Christ and God's people.

**STEP FOUR:** If the brother does not respond to the church, the church will, by the authority of Christ, excommunicate that sinning brother, and turn him over to the authority of Satan for the destruction of the flesh (1 Corinthians 5).

Sins that merit church discipline are, but are not limited to, the following: gossip, slander, drunkenness, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lying, perjury, child abuse, child molestation, fraud, theft, indolence, divisiveness, doctrinal perversion (1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Thessalonians 3:5ff, Romans 16:17).

This church that carefully follows these principles will be pure and holy. However, when sinful members are not judged specifically, judgment becomes corporate.

## **89. THE CALL TO PEACE**

*Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

The imperative in this text comes from the Greek word "*brabeueto*" which means "to rule" or "to umpire" over one's soul. To the mind of modern man, an umpire is a sports official who presides over a sports match, ensuring rules are followed and making judgment calls. Likewise, peace acts like an umpire to prevent us calling us to play by the rules and to prevent us from doing something unreasonable and unlawful when under stress in the course of life.

The opposite of peace is strife, anger, frustration, fear, bitterness, and resentment.

"*be ye thankful*" is also an imperative stressing the optimum mark of a healthy soul – a crest of spiritual health.

### **Q: How Do We Get Peace?**

We all need peace at various stages of our lives.

There are no 12 step programs to obtain peace, but obtaining peace does involve our consent and cooperation.

Here are a few actions we can take that will create a climate for us to enjoy the peace of God

#### **(1) Distinguish between "peace with God" and the "peace of God."**

*Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

***Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule (act as judge, umpire) in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.***

Peace with God is a benefit of believing the gospel – a result of justification – of having a right standing with the Father. When a person hears and believes in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the war between the man and God is over. Our Armistice Day is the day of our salvation.

It is not a feeling, it is a fact all Christians possess. It is an objective in nature, and represents a change in status from condemned to justified (Romans 5: see the benefits of justification, forgiveness, regeneration, reconciliation).

The peace of God is needed when when unwelcome events barge into our lives. The peace of God is a subjective feeling that all is well under His providence. It is the calm we receive from the Spirit when we trust God and believe that "*all things are working together for good*" (Romans 8:28) and that His "grace is sufficient in all things" (2 Cor 12:9-10).

## **(2) Distinguish between the peace of Christ and the peace of the world.**

***John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.***

"Peace" is mentioned twice; that is, the Lord gives *double peace*. "troubled" and "fear" is the opposite of peace. Both the verbs "troubled" and "afraid" are imperatives negated and restrained by the adverb "not;" that is, Christ calls his people to exercise restraint and to **not** let the soul drift out into the turbulent sea crested with waves powered by "fear," "doubt," and "anxiety."

The world offers peace to those who accept its temporal, earthly, fickle, superficial, sensual political views, control, and statutes. The peace that Christ offers is a gift of heavenly grace to those who believe His promises, trust Him, and are in a right standing with Him.

The world's peace comes by eliminating suffering; Christ's peace comes to those in the midst of suffering. The world offers peace to the complaint, Christ offers peace to the defiant - to those that defy the world with its lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and self-sufficiency (pride).

## **(3) Peace is a gift . . . and it must be received by faith. See John 14:1 and John 20:19**

### **(4) Resist anxiety, anger, fear, and wrath:**

***James 1:19-20 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.***

***John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.***

Fear (anxiety, worry, anger, cowardice) and trouble (agitations, irritations, anger, disturbances) are the opposite of peace.

The Greek verb "*Let not your heart be troubled*" (*tarassesthō*) is a present, middle imperative negated by the adverb "*not*" (me); that is, when trouble stirs up anxiety in our heart, we are under command to trust Christ for His peace and to participate in resisting the temptation to worry and fret.

***Philippians 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.***

The verb "*be careful*" (merimnate) is another term for anxiety or agitation of the soul. It is present active imperative negated by the adjective-adverb "*nothing*" (mēden) which is in the emphatic position in this sentence – *Let nothing trouble you.*

“*in everything*” includes every negative circumstance.

The Spirit forbids the believer to be anxious, troubled, fearful, doubtful, agitated, irritated, angry, lustful or disturbed. Peace is king and it must reign in the castle of the human heart over emotions vying for expression when enemies storm our fortress.

This text repeats our Lord’s command in Matthew 6:25; Matthew 6:34 - “*Let not your heart be troubled. . . .*”

Let us remember these instructions were imparted to us by Paul, a prisoner bruised and clawed by chains in a Roman prison.

#### **(5) The opposite of anxiety is prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving.**

The conjunction “but” (alla) is a very strong adversative implying that fretting is the opposite of prayer and thanksgiving.

Both prayer and supplication are proceeded by the Greek article indicating a specific duty of prayer – possibly including worship in the church.

Instead of worry, fret, and despair, the Spirit calls agitated Christians to *pray* (*proseuché*: general prayer and worship), make *supplications* (*deēsei*; formal, genuine, specific pleadings ), and *give thanks* (eucharistia; gratitude) in the midst of troubled seas. See 1 Timothy 2:1-7.

It is possible, even probable, to rise above fears and anxiety by “*casting our care on Him who careth for us,*”

Thankfulness is the queen of virtues and when the queen has her way in the castle of the heart, all her servants are careful, orderly, and happy.

#### **(6) Claim the peace that passes all understanding that shall keep your heart and minds.**

***Philippians 4:6-7 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.***

The Greek word “*careful*” means “anxious” or “to be troubled with cares.” Restraining rebel passions is the first duty of the troubled soul; that is, the believer must squash all mutinous desires challenging the throne.

*Prayer, supplications, and thanksgiving* is the triple remedy for fretfulness. In exchange for attentive prayer, the apostle promises the peace of God – His peace keeps guard duty over the weary soul.



The verb "*keep*" (phroureó) means to guard as on a military patrol; that is, God's peace keeps watch over one's mind and emotions to prevent the soul from doing something foolish and irrational. This peace is a supernatural, miracle working calm that braces the man during the tremors of trials.

A *trouble heart* has a way attracting all the “wanna-be” kings bidding for power in the human heart: fear, rebellion, frustration, doubt, and self-will. Thus, the first duty of a troubled soul is to resist rebel powers and to surrender to the King of Salem (Genesis 14:18; Isaiah 9:6 – King of Shalom).

Note the definition of peace in Philippians 4:6: a peace that "*passeth all understanding*."

The word "*passeth*" (*huperechó*) means "to rise above," "to be superior," and "to govern." In Romans 13:1 *huperechó* is translated "higher powers."

The noun "*understanding*" (*nous*) refers "to reason" and one's "intellect." Paul deems the peace of God superior to the intellect of man . . . to the circumstances of man. The promise is that a pious Christian can have a supernatural peace, a calm restful spirit, without a direct change in circumstances -- a peace that defies explanation. It is a peace that calms the sailing soul without calming the sea upon which one's ship is putting to sea.

#### **(7) Think on holy things:**

***Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.***

“Think” is an imperative. Think more of Christ, and less of self; more of Christ, and less of sin.

*"Great thoughts of your sin alone will drive you to despair; but great thoughts of Christ will pilot you into the haven of peace" - Charles Spurgeon.*

#### **(8) Develop holy habits:**

***Philippians 4:9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.***

*"Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny" (R.W. Emerson).*

A minor disturbance happened in an Italian village, and a woman came running into the chapel chattering away as fast as she could jiggle her tongue. The priest held up his hand and stopped her prattle. Closing his eyes, the priest slowly spoke, "*May the Lord bless you and keep you and give you peace!*" Dropping his hand, he spoke to the roused woman, "*Now, you can speak.*"

*2 Thessalonians 3:16 "Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all."*

## **90. THE CALL TO KEEP THE FIRST DAY SABBATH**

***1 Corinthians 16:2 Upon the first day of the week (the First-day Sabbath) let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.***

Celebrating the Christian Sabbath on Sunday was an established tradition even in the first century. **It proclaimed freedom under God's rule.** But, the importance and significance of the Sabbath **has been clearly translated away!**

The Greek word "*sabbaton*" is translated "day" or "week" by modern translators and thus clouds its significance. The First-Day Sabbath; i.e. the term Sabbath (*sabbaton*) is used in the following text demonstrating that Sunday was clearly considered a Christian Sabbath early in the church:

- Matthew 28:1 "first day of the week" = mi,an sabba,twn or First-Day Sabbath
- Mark 16:2, 9 "first day of the week" = mia/| tw/n sabba,twn or First-Day Sabbath
- Luke 24:1 "first day of the week" = prw,th| sabba,tou or First-Day Sabbath
- John 20:1 "first day of the week" = mia/| tw/n sabba,twn or First-Day Sabbath
- John 20:19 "first day of the week" = th/| mia/| sabba,twn or First-Day Sabbath
- Acts 20:7 "first day of the week" = th/| mia/| tw/n sabba,twn or First-Day Sabbath
- 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 "first day of the week" = mi,an sabba,tou or First-Day Sabbath

Paul ordered the Corinthians to set aside an offering on the first day of the week (Sunday) for the saints in Jerusalem. The word "week" is the Greek word *sabbatou*. The genitive *sabbatou* is the attributive to *mian* which should be translated "first day"; i.e. "***the first day Sabbath***" or "the first day of the Sabbath." The imperative *titheto* {to set aside} is definitely connected with collections, but one has to assume that the early Christians under Paul's care had already established the first day of the week as a Sabbath. To connect "orders" in verse one with the "Sabbath" in verse two has an indirect but logical connection. While it is not a silver bullet, it certainly does strengthen the concept of the "Lord's day" in conjunction with Revelation 1:10.

Since the Lord was raised on this blessed day, the Christian Sabbath was **separated from** the Jewish Sabbath and **superseded it** in importance by virtue of a superior redemption (Hebrews 9:12) and the "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Since the Christian Sabbath is connected with Israel's three feasts (the wave offering, Pentecost, and feast of tabernacles), The First-Day Sabbath commemorates the LORD's work of creation, our eternal redemption and salvation by virtue of our Lord's death, burial, and resurrection on of believers.

The goal of history is a Sabbath rest, the kingdom of God. The Christian Sabbath is not the same as the Jewish Sabbath. The Hebrew Sabbath remains a shadow while the **Christian Sabbath** is the **substance** -- the fulfillment of OT hope (Colossians 2:16ff). The Hebrew Sabbath typified the hope of Christ's redemptive rest while the Christian Sabbath tastes the first fruits reality of that rest. If the Spirit had not led the apostles to make a clean break (established discontinuity) from the Jewish Sabbath, Christianity might have only been another Jewish cult. This discontinuity from the Saturday Sabbath shows us the spiritual maturity in the early church.

Christ's resurrection bolted to the top of the list of the most important events in human history. On the Jewish Sunday, the first day of the Jewish work week, Christ conquered man's fundamental problem (death). He was God's wave offering; God's Firstfruits; God's Holy One; God's New Creation; and His confirmed Christ and Lord. In Christ, the holy God and sinful man find redemptive rest. Therefore, it was quintessential that Christians separate themselves from the Jewish Sabbath and remember God's greater redemptive work in Christ on Sunday, the First-Day Sabbath. And, it appears it was so ordered by the Apostolic Command in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. **Thus, the Christian Sabbath expresses a clean break from Judaism by nullifying the Jewish Sabbath and by instituting the Sunday-Sabbath. But, there is also continuity.** Both the Jewish holy day and the Christian holy day are called a Sabbath. Both days were a day of rest. Both days were holy. But, the Christian Sabbath announces a greater salvation, a greater redemption, a greater deliverance, a greater Lamb, and a greater rest.

### **FACTS ON THE JEWISH SABBATH**

- The word "*Sabbath*" means "cease" or "desist" or "rest." "The pattern of the Sabbath is God's creative rest; the goal of the Sabbath is man's redemptive rest" (Rushdoony, p. 128). There are three kinds of Sabbaths: the creation Sabbath, the Hebrew Sabbath, and the Christian Sabbath. The *Christians-Sabbath* is called "The Lord's Day," "the First-Day Sabbath," or "the Eighth Day Sabbath."
- There is no evidence Hebrew people observed any type of Sabbath prior to the Exodus (Exodus 16). No record of Sabbath keeping emerged before the Exodus. The Saturday Sabbath attained significance sometime after Israel's departure from Egypt (Exodus 16:23, 35, 26, 29). Thus, when God said, "Remember the Sabbath," it was not something Israel was unfamiliar with at Mt. Sinai.
- It was a day of rest and cessation from work (Exodus 16:14-36; 20:8-11; 34:21; Deuteronomy 5:12-15).
- It was a remembrance of God's original creation and His rest.
- It was a time to remember their deliverance from Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:12-15); "Remember" was political reflection on Israel's former enslavement in Egypt and deliverance from bondage by redemption. The Sabbath was not primarily for worship, but for rest and reflection (Deuteronomy 5:12-15).
- It was a time to remember their covenant with God.
- It was not, however, a day of worship.
- Under bondage, Israel worked 365 days a year for Pharaoh. The Sabbath charted blessedness to the nation as a result of their redemption from slavery. The flag of freedom blew in the winds over Israel; and, to protect that freedom, Sabbath keeping reviewed God's redemption from tribute, slavery, and bondage.
- Severe laws enforced the Sabbath (Exodus. 20:8-11; 34:21; Leviticus. 23:3; Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Jeremiah 17:22). Gates had to be shut (Nehemiah 13:19); no burdens could be carried (Jeremiah 17:21) or wine pressed (Nehemiah 13:15); no sticks could be gathered (Numbers 15:32-35); no fires could be kindled (Ezekiel. 35:3); no harvesting (Nehemiah. 13:15); no food could be sold or bought

(Nehemiah. 10:31; 13:15). However, life could be saved and necessities performed (Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9; Matthew 12:10-13; 12:11; Luke 14:5).

- The Hebrew Sabbath followed the lunar calendar or Egyptian calendar of 12 months of 30 days, and therefore, could not possibly correspond to our modern Saturday which follows a solar calendar. Not only is Saturday keeping the wrong date for the Jewish Sabbath, it stings with theological blunders.

### **THE MEANING OF THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH**

**The Christian Sabbath announces fulfilment.** The brightness of the First-Day Sabbath rest fulfills the shadow of the Hebrew Saturday Sabbath. Israel's deliverance from bondage under Pharaoh was a mighty act of God, but it was only a shadow of his mightiest work of saving his people from their sins. While the Hebrew-Sabbath reflected on Israel's redemption from slavery in Egypt, the Christ-event announces ETERNAL REDEMPTION (Hebrews 9:12).

**The First-Day Sabbath commemorates the Lord's resurrection from the dead** (Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1; Acts 20:7). On this day, He demonstrated His defeat of Satan, sin, and death. Thus, celebration of the Lord's Day as a Sabbath is far superior in its Excellencies to the Hebrew Sabbath. Israel had a lamb and sprinkled its blood on the door post to save them from the death angel striking the first born; but, the Christian Sabbath announces the true Lamb of God who shed his blood to save his elect from eternal damnation.

**The First-Day Sabbath proclaims eternal rest for those who seek shelter from eternal wrath under accomplishments of Christ.** The first Sabbath had no evening because it was interrupted by Adam's sin. Thus, God's seventh-day rest became man's first day of work and only intensified as death settled over creation. The Saturday-Sabbath commemorated God's rest after creation as well as reminded the Hebrews that his rest was interrupted by the fall of man. Thus, the First-Day Sabbath commemorates God's remedy for sin in Christ.

The Saturday-Sabbath meant rest, restoration, regeneration, forgiveness, cancellation of debt and restoration to the weary (Deuteronomy 15:1-6).

**More so, the First-Day Sabbath announces eternal salvation and eternal rest in Christ.** Sunday is a day of restoring the soul, cessation from work, regeneration of the mind, and forgiveness -- a day of cancelling debts, a day of announcing God's jubilee through the proclamation of the gospel. The Hebrews worked six days and then rested; the Christian rests on the First-Day Sabbath and then works -- not to earn salvation, but to live out a life of grateful obedience to God's law through a life of love.

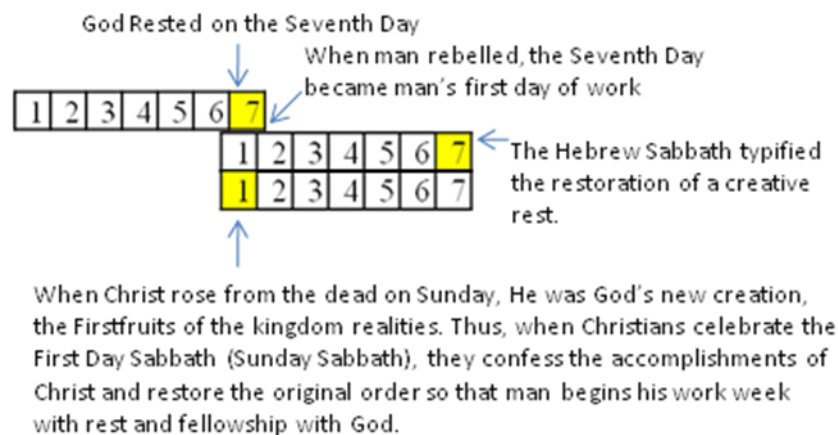
**The First-Day Sabbath restores the original Sabbath rest in Genesis one** wherein God's rest was interrupted by man's sin; i.e. it reestablishes God's order for the world. It is superior to the Hebrew Sabbath just as spiritual circumcision is superior to physical circumcision (Colossians 2:11). The Christian Sabbath is the Queen of holy days while the Hebrew Sabbath operates as a mere handmaid of royalty. Just as gold is more valuable than copper, the First-Day Sabbath is more precious than the Hebrew Sabbath. It cost God a lamb to redeem Israel out of bondage to Pharaoh, but it took THE LAMB OF GOD to save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21; John 1:29).

God made Adam and Eve on the sixth day and instructed them on the dominion mandate. God rested on the seventh day. The seventh day was man's first full day and man was to share in that rest. When Adam

rejected God's law-order, God's rest was interrupted. As sin entered the world, man's rest ceased and his work began; that is, the seventh day became man's first day of work.

In His grace, God gave Adam and Eve a promise of a Savior that would destroy sin and restore the creative rest. In Exodus, man was commanded to rest on his seventh day of work in anticipation of the coming of Messiah and the ultimate Jubilee. When Christ rose from the dead on the first day, his redemptive work was finished. Through his resurrection, he proclaimed victory over Satan, sin, and death. Therefore, the Sunday-Sabbath is a celebration of the accomplishments of Christ and His restoration of the original order. The Sunday Sabbath rest established by Christianity now coincides with God's original creative rest.

**Figure 15: Sabbath Restored**



**The First-Day Sabbath proclaims spiritual freedom.** The Christians Sabbath reflects on Christ's victory over the trinity of evil. It announces freedom from Judaism, freedom from works-based righteousness and performance based theologies, freedom from the power of sin, freedom from defiling habits, freedom from loneliness and isolation from God. The gospel proclaims freedom because it offers men the benefits of justification, reconciliation, forgiveness, and regeneration.

**The First-Day Sabbath proclaims political freedom.** A weekly day of rest is unknown in other cultures. The wicked have no rest (Isaiah 57:20-21). "Remember" the Sabbath took Israel back to the original creation with God as the model of work and rest. The wicked search for rest, but will never find it outside of Christ and God's law. The proletarianization of man promised wealth and rest, but the idealism of Marxism (Stalin and Mao) killed and enslaved more men and women than any political system in history. Few revolutions compare with the cruel bloody slaughter of millions of Russian Christians.

According to Deuteronomy 5:12-15, the goal of the Sabbath was freedom for man and beast via a reflection on political freedom; mighty redemption, the maintenance of freedom through obedience to God's law; the defense of freedom through war; and, the defeat of political enemies. The Christians Sabbath reflects on Christ's victory over Satan, sin, and death. Without permission from Caesar, the apostles announced Christ as the true King of Mankind and established a First-Day rest for the church to remember his highly exalted position as King of kings. God's law forbids a Christian to be a slave of man (1 Corinthians 7:23). Thus, honoring the First-Day Sabbath is a safeguard against being man's servant and a government slave.

**The First-Day Sabbath excels as a day of worship and instruction in God's Word** -- a day of joy and celebration of our Lord's triumphs over sin and death. It is a day to celebrate the "new creation," a new type of humanity being created by the Spirit, of which Christ is the Firstfruits and Head of the New Israel. The Saturday-Sabbath contained no command to study God's Word, but the Sunday-Sabbath is a day of worship wherein Christians come to learn God's Law-word and to renew their commitment to love the Lord.

**The First-Day Sabbath operates for the development of holiness or sanctification.** The concept of holiness is carried forward. While Christians are called to develop holiness every day, one day is commanded to be set aside because of human weakness. God intended the First-Day Sabbath to be a time to repair broken fellowship, confess sins, and renew our vows and commitment to the risen Savior. The remembrance of the New Covenant of His blood and man's duties to Christ shines as the lofty purpose of the Christian Sabbath.

**The First-Day Sabbath commemorates the Christ event and the marvelous benefits available in the gospel.** In taking of the bread and the cup, we remember the incarnation, life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and session of the Lord Jesus Christ. The blessings of the age to come have been thrust into our experience to enjoy now in a first fruits way.

**The Christian-Sabbath announces not only salvation for believers but eternal damnation for unbelievers.** Those who believe in Christ are saved, but those who reject Him are eternally damned. Violating the Hebrew Sabbath warranted the death penalty, while the neglect of Christ and the meaning of the First-Day Sabbath warrants eternal condemnation and death (John 3:36).

**The Christian-Sabbath breached the legal status of the Hebrew Sabbath.** The penalties connected to the Hebrew Sabbath are not carried forth into the practice of the Christian Sabbath. There are no penalties attached to laxity or even betrayal of the First-Day Sabbath. But, you would think that something that carried the death penalty attached to it would have some relevance to the Christian era. The neglect of the First-Day Sabbath does solicit death to work in the heart of the believer; and, indicates Christian surrender to the advancement of paganism in the culture. Neglect of Christ and the rest He offers results in eternal condemnation for the unbeliever. Obedience means life; disobedience means death. To the Christian, He is the Vine; we are the branches. Apart from him we can do nothing. The Christian Sabbath, therefore, trains the believer to abide in Christ (John 15:1-15).

**The Christian-Sabbath announces equality among the redeemed.** The Sabbath meant respect for family, for servants, for animals, for the land, and for freedom from debt. The Christian Sabbath reminds us that: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). On the First-Day Sabbath Christians not only honor the day but honor one another as brothers and sisters in Christ and fellow-pilgrims on the road of life. There is no room for pride. The ground is level at the cross. Even the rich are exhorted not to be "high-minded" (1 Timothy 6:17). On this day, even the poorest of the poor are welcomed in church and served communion.

### **IMPORTANCE OF THE FIRST-DAY SABBATH**

**The Christian Sabbath is important, but not all important in a legal sense.** The NT lacks a command to keep the Sabbath unless it is 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. Unlike the other nine Commandments, the command to obey the Sabbath lacks a moral attribute, a direct reflection of some moral virtue attached to

the character of God—unless that attribute is holiness. Since the Ten Commandments are a summary of the entire law, it seems fitting to place the ceremonial laws, dietary laws, and festival laws under the Sabbath law; that is, unlike the law of murder, there is nothing inherently right or wrong, harmful or malignant, about observing a particular 24 hour period of the week in preference to another; i.e. no direct harm to mankind occurs by resting on Wednesday as opposed to Saturday (or Sunday). Saturday Sabbath breaking was only right or wrong because God ordained this law for a season in Israel's history for a typical purpose. Even Paul, a radical rabbi with ultimate respect for God's Law-word abandoned the Saturday Hebrew Sabbath in careful deference to the First-Day Sunday Sabbath without a violation of conscience. But, even here there seems to be a tremendous amount of freedom on how this day is celebrated.

Having said this, **the Christian Sabbath was a firm practice in the NT**. The term “ordered” in 1 Corinthians 16:1 is closely associated with laying aside collections for the saints **ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE SABBATH (SUNDAY)**. Surely, something that had the death penalty attached to in the OT should have an important application in the NT. If Paul under the inspiration of the Spirit ordered the church to collect an offering on the first *sabbatou* of the week, setting aside Sunday as the Christian Sabbath has merit and force. Therefore, I conclude the Christian Sabbath was critical to development of the church, for instruction in the gospel, for fellowship, for communion, and for the development of holiness. To treat Sunday like an ordinary day seems out of sync with all of Scripture.

**The Christian Sabbath is important because it is a day to remember Christ in the Breaking of the Bread.** By keeping the Christian Sabbath, believers remember the person of Christ, His historical resurrection, the meaning of His history, the effects of Christ's accomplishments on the cross for us, and our duty to be sanctified unto Him—thus, in keeping the First-Day Sabbath, we remember the preciousness of Jesus and the glories of the gospel.

**The Sabbath typified the rest God wants all believers to have in the redemptive work of Christ and salvation by grace.** The Hebrew Sabbath foreshadowed the true Christian Sabbath (Hebrews 4:9). The Christian Sabbath not only incorporates the creative rest, but redemptive rest! On the Christian Sabbath, believers rest from their labors, reflect on God's creation, and celebrate Christ's victory over death and his redemption at the cross. It is a time to reflect on one's personal salvation and the completion of redemption at his Parousia.

OT Sabbath-keeping was so important, the death penalty was attached to its violations (Exodus 31:14-16). Though the death penalty is not attached to a neglect of the First-Day Sabbath, the death penalty attached to breaking the Hebrew Sabbath reinforces not only the benefit of honoring the Sunday Sabbath, it informs us in its shadow form **that death stalks those who neglect the Christian Sabbath** (Christ). Inattention to the Christian Sabbath not only invites death to work in the individual heart, its neglect weakens the church as every member of the body is important to the success of the church's mission.

In the NT era, Sabbath regulations were amended and penalties dropped (Colossians 2:16-17). No penalties were in effect after the resurrection; that is, the legal status changed. The extent of a Sabbath rest was left to the individual conscience, and not civil or religious authorities. The Christian Sabbath is important, but not all important. The Sabbath of Israel was retired. A Christian state cannot and should not mimic ancient Israel's Saturday's Sabbath. However, a humanistic state that worships productivity and work by alien law is an assault on the Christian order. When man is reduced to economic man in the utopian mind, man becomes utilitarian.

**To neglect the First-Day Sabbath is to reject Christ's redemption and to seek salvation by another illegitimate way.** To go back under the Jewish shadow is to deny the reality of the Corpus. Just as being circumcised is a fall from grace (Galatians 5:1-6), so Saturday Sabbath-keeping is a departure from the gospel.

**Early Christians honored the Sunday as the First-Day Sabbath and considered it heresy to observe the Jewish Saturday-Sabbath.** Council of Laodicea (circa 360 AD) explicitly forbade Christians from "Judaizing by resting on the Sabbath" and encouraged honoring the Lord's Day. Likewise, every Christian pastor should consider returning to a Saturday Sabbath as a religious act of observing the law an act of unbelief . . . of heresy . . . of apostasy.

So strong was Sunday Sabbath keeping that early church Fathers considered Saturday-Sabbath keeping apostasy.

*"Be not deceived with strange doctrines, nor with old fables, which are unprofitable. For if we still live according to the Jewish law, we acknowledge that we have not received grace... If, therefore, those who were brought up in the ancient order of things have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day, on which also our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death (which some deny), through which mystery we received faith, and on account of which we suffer in order that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ our only teacher, how shall we be able to live apart from him for whom even the prophets were looking as their teacher since they were his disciples in the spirit?... let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's Day as a festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the days of the week. It is absurd to speak of Jesus Christ with the tongue, and to cherish in the mind a Judaism which has now come to an end. for where there is Christianity there cannot be Judaism.... These things I address to you, my beloved, not that I know any of you to be in such a state; but, as less than any of you, I desire to guard you beforehand, that ye fall not upon the hooks of vain doctrine, but that you may rather attain to a full assurance in Christ..." (Ignatius, Epistle to the Magnesians, ch 9. Ante-Nicene Fathers , vol. 1, pg. 62-63.). Emphasis added.*

**The goal of the Sabbath was a debt free society as well as a guilt-free society.** It is significant that on the Christians Sabbath (1 Corinthians 16:1- 2), believers took up a collection to pay ministers, church workers, and to help saints laboring for the Lord around the world. Thus, the Christian Sabbath creates life. The Jewish Sabbath meant a cessation of work; the Christian Sabbath spawned good deeds and created hope for the afflicted.

Some Sabbaths, like the Sabbath Feasts, were seasons of feasting and celebration. God wants His people at rest, full of joy, and celebrating life. The Christian Sabbath was a day of feasting, a day of celebrating new life in Christ. In fact, in early America fasting was strictly prohibited on the Lord's Day.

Sabbaths were holy (Ezekiel. 44:24). Man was to delight in the sovereignty and will of God. God willed that man might work, be productive, and enjoy freedom. Christ is God's new creation and consequently as a result of our new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), we are created to do good works in conformity with His law (Ephesians 5:10; Romans 13:8ff). Thus, the Christian Sabbath is a day devoted to the development of sanctification: "Be ye holy as I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16)



*"Moreover God says to the Jews, 'Your new moons and Sabbaths I cannot endure.' You see how he says, 'The present Sabbaths are not acceptable to me, but the Sabbath which I have made in which, when I have rested from all things, I will make the beginning of the eighth day which is the beginning of another world.' Wherefore we Christians keep the eighth day for joy, on which also Jesus arose from the dead and when he appeared ascended into heaven. (15:8f, The Epistle of Barnabas, 100 AD, Ante- Nicene Fathers , vol. 1, pg. 147).*

*"But Sunday is the day on which we hold our common assembly, because it is the first day of the week and Jesus our Savior on the same day rose from the dead." (First apology of Justin, Ch 68).*

*"We solemnize the day after Saturday in contradistinction to those who call this day their Sabbath" (Tertullian's Apology, Ch 16).*

*"(T)he day of his (Christ's) light . . . was the day of his resurrection from the dead, which they say, as being the one and only truly holy day and the Lord's day, is better than any number of days as we ordinarily understand them, and better than the days set apart by the Mosaic Law for feasts, new moons, and sabbaths, which the Apostle (Paul) teaches are the shadow of days and not days in reality" (Proof of the Gospel 4:16:186).*

## **THE BATTLE FOR SUNDAY**

There is a battle for First-Day Sabbath. On one hand you have Christians who place more of an emphasis on the child's Sunday morning soccer game than Sunday worship; and, on the other hand you have Judaizers challenging Christianity by advocating a return to Saturday-Sabbath keeping.

The First-Day Sabbath has been weakened by a lack of knowledge and conviction about the importance of the Lord's Day. Christians adopted the Sabbath principal and applied it to Sunday (Acts 20:7). John called it "the Lord's Day" (Revelation 1:10). Sunday has been a day of rest and reflection for Christians for two thousand years of history. When families are all wrapped up in soccer games, tennis matches, and swimming meets on Sunday morning, one has to ask if there is enough in the body politic to stand against the avalanche of humanism drowning the culture? The lack of conviction about the Lord's Day is one of the reasons the humanistic agenda of abortion and same-sex unions has made so many inroads in our society. Where is the army of the Lord? They are at the soccer game.

The Sunday-Sabbath is also challenged by modern day Judaizers. Many Messianic communities are practicing a strict Sabbath principal from Friday night to Saturday night. While it does no physical harm, it does call for condemnation. Saturday Sabbath-keeping is not innocuous. These teachers bind other men's consciences to their Judaistic biases (See Romans 14) at the expense of not "holding the head" and His accomplishments on resurrection Sunday (Colossians 2:19). When Men wear yamakas and prayer shawls and keep Jewish festivals instead of the Remembrance Feast (1 Corinthians 11:17ff), have they not apostatized from the faith? When Galatian men returned to Jewish practices, Paul pronounced a curse on them (Galatians 1:8).

The early church clearly adopted the Sunday Sabbath in the first century which they called the "**First-Day Sabbath.**" The term "week" in Matthew 28:1, Luke 24:1, and Acts 20:7 is the Greek word "Sabbaton." So strong was this view the early church considered it apostasy for anyone to keep the Saturday, Jewish Sabbath. They clearly saw the Jewish Sabbath as a shadow of the Christian Sabbath and refused to go back to it!!! Historically, going back to circumcision, Saturday Sabbath-keeping, and a celebration of

Jewish festivals was clearly heresy and digression in spiritual maturity. Further, such practices are a **denial of the person and work of Christ!!**

*For I testify again to every man that **is circumcised**, that he is **a debtor** to do the whole law. **Christ is become of no effect** unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace (Galatians 5:4-5).*

*For I testify again to every man that **is a Festival Keeper**, that he is **a debtor** to do the whole law. **Christ is become of no effect** unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*

*For I testify again to every man that **is a Saturday Sabbath keeper**, that he is **a debtor** to do the whole law. **Christ is become of no effect** unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*

*For I testify again to every man that **is wearing a yarmulka**, that he is **a debtor** to do the whole law. **Christ is become of no effect** unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*

*For I testify again to every man that **is wearing ribbons of blue**, that he is **a debtor** to do the whole law. **Christ is become of no effect** unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*

*"Christians should not Judaize and should not be idle on the sabbath, but should work on that day; they should, however, particularly reverence the Lord's day and, if possible, not work on it, because they were Christians"(360 A.D. Council of Laodicea, canon 29).*

*"You have put on Christ, you have become a member of the Lord and been enrolled in the heavenly city, and you still grovel in the Law (of Moses)? How is it possible for you to obtain the kingdom? Listen to Paul's words, that the observance of the Law overthrows the gospel, and learn, if you will, how this comes to pass, and tremble, and shun this pitfall. Why do you keep the sabbath and fast with the Jews?" (Homilies on Galatians 2:17).*

*"The rite of circumcision was venerable in the Jews' account, forasmuch as the Law itself gave way thereto, and the sabbath was less esteemed than circumcision. For that circumcision might be performed, the sabbath was broken; but that the sabbath might be kept, circumcision was never broken; and mark, I pray, the dispensation of God. This is found to be even more solemn than the sabbath, as not being omitted at certain times. When then it is done away, much more is the sabbath" (387 Ohn Chrysostom, Homilies on Philippians 10).*

The Christian Sabbath not only incorporates the principle of physical rest, but commemorates the believer's redemptive rest by virtue of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Christ is our Sabbath; our Passover; our Redeemer; our Wave Offering; our Pentecost; our Feast of Tabernacles. In Him we celebrate the first fruits of the kingdom of God and anticipate its unveiling in history. Why would anyone want to go back to Judaism—a mere shadow of the good things that are now here (Hebrews 10:1)? The Sun of righteousness has appeared with healing in his wings (Malachi 4:2).

There is a battle for Sunday from two sides. On one side we have Christians who have no conviction about the day and treat Sunday as a holiday instead of a holy day, and on the other side a Messianic element that sees the worldliness of the church and offers a cure by returning to the sacerdotal practices of Judaism.

The former weakens the church through worldliness, and the latter weakens the church by Judaizing it. Let them be accursed.

### **QUOTES BY THE CHURCH FATHERS on the Sabbath**

*..” ..every Lord's day, hold your solemn assemblies, and rejoice: for he will be guilty of sin who fasts on the Lord's day, being the day of the resurrection... (Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 7, pg. 449).*

*“And on the day of our Lord's resurrection, which is the Lord's day, meet more diligently, sending praise to God that made the universe by Jesus, and sent Him to us, and condescended to let Him suffer, and raised Him from the dead. Otherwise what apology will he make to God who does not assemble on that day to hear the saving word concerning the resurrection...?” (Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 7, pg. 423).*

*“But every Lord's day, do ye gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one that is at variance with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord...” (Matt. 5:23-24) (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, Chap. 14:1, Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 7, page 381).*

*“On the day of the resurrection of the Lord, that is, the Lord's day, assemble yourselves together, without fail, giving thanks to God, and praising Him for those mercies God has bestowed upon you through Christ, and has delivered you from ignorance, error, and bondage, that your sacrifice may be unspotted, and acceptable to God, who has said concerning His universal Church: "In every place shall incense and a pure sacrifice be offered unto me; for I am a great King, saith the Lord Almighty, and my name is wonderful among the heathen, (Malachi 1:11, 14)” (Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 7, pg. 471).*

*“they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath not to (do) any wicked deeds, never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of good food— but food of an ordinary and innocent kind” (Pliny, Letters to Trajan, Book X, in The Loeb Classical Library, eds E. Capps., T.E. Page, W.H.D. Rouse, Pliny Letters II, translated by William Melmoth. (London: William Heinemann, MCMXV), p. 403.)*

*“Moreover God says to the Jews, 'Your new moons and Sabbaths I cannot endure.' You see how he says, 'The present Sabbaths are not acceptable to me, but the Sabbath which I have made in which, when I have rested from all things, I will make the beginning of the eighth day which is the beginning of another world.' Wherefore we Christians keep the eighth day for joy, on which also Jesus arose from the dead and when he appeared ascended into heaven. (15:8f, The Epistle of Barnabas, 100 AD, Ante- Nicene Fathers , vol. 1, pg. 147).*

*..” ..those who have persecuted and do persecute Christ, if they do not repent, shall not inherit anything on the holy mountain. But the Gentiles, who have believed on Him, and have repented of the sins which they have committed, they shall receive the inheritance along with the patriarchs and the prophets, and the just men who are descended from Jacob, even*

*although they neither keep the Sabbath, nor are circumcised, nor observe the feasts. Assuredly they shall receive the holy inheritance of God” (Dialogue With Trypho the Jew, 150-165 AD, Ante-Nicene Fathers , vol.1, page 207).*

*“But if we do not admit this, we shall be liable to fall into foolish opinion, as if it were not the same God who existed in the times of Enoch and all the rest, who neither were circumcised after the flesh, nor observed Sabbaths, nor any other rites, seeing that Moses enjoined such observances... For if there was no need of circumcision before Abraham, or of the observance of Sabbaths, of feasts and sacrifices, before Moses; no more need is there of them now, after that, according to the will of God, Jesus Christ the Son of God has been born without sin, of a virgin sprung from the stock of Abraham.” (Dialogue With Trypho the Jew, 150-165 AD, Ante-Nicene Fathers , vol. 1, page 206).*

*“There is no other thing for which you blame us, my friends, is there than this? That we do not live according to the Law, nor, are we circumcised in the flesh as your forefathers, nor do we observe the Sabbath as you do.” (Dialogue with Trypho 10:1. In verse 3 the Jew Trypho acknowledges that Christians 'do not keep the Sabbath.')*

*“But Sunday is the day on which we hold our common assembly, because it is the first day of the week and Jesus our Savior on the same day rose from the dead.” (First apology of Justin, Ch 68).*

*“The commandment of circumcision, requiring them always to circumcise the children on the eighth day, was a type of the true circumcision by which we are circumcised from error and evil through the resurrection from the dead on the first day of the week of Jesus Christ our Lord. For the first day of the week, although it is the first of all days, yet according to the number of the days in a cycle is called the eighth (while still remaining the first)” (Dialogue 41:4).*

*“We are always together with one another. And for all the things with which we are supplied we bless the Maker of all through his Son Jesus Christ and through his Holy Spirit. And on the day called Sunday there is a gathering together in the same place of all who live in a city or a rural district. (There follows an account of a Christian worship service, which is quoted in VII.2.) We all make our assembly in common on the day of the Sun, since it is the first day, on which God changed the darkness and matter and made the world, and Jesus Christ our Savior arose from the dead on the same day. For they crucified him on the day before Saturn's day, and on the day after (which is the day of the Sun) he appeared to his apostles and taught his disciples these things.” (Apology, I, 67:1-3, 7; First Apology, 145 AD, Ante-Nicene Fathers , Vol. 1, pg. 186).*

### **A POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE SABBATH**

Man, by nature, prefers slavery to freedom; security to liberty; franchises with bonds than duty with risks; self-interest to God's interests. First-Day Sabbath keeping is the cure while its oversight is the disease. Sabbath keeping contains keys to locked doors while its neglect contains bonds and chains.

The goal of history, said Augustine, is a Sabbath with no evening (St. Augustine, The City of God, Book XXII, Chapter xxx). The Promise Land was foreshadowed by the kingdom of God, a type of Sabbath (Hebrews 4:9).

So important was freedom and rest that God ordained this lesson for man, for sons, for donkeys, for oxen, for maidservants, and for the land, which Israel rented from God.

The key to understanding God's love of freedom is a study of the Sabbath. To Stalin, there was no God. Under communism, man must work to become his own savior. He enslaved more men than any other man in history. A proper application of the Christian Sabbath will nail the coffin shut on slavery -- slavery by humanists who offer of franchises that bind man to socialistic systems. To neglect the First-Day Sabbath is to turn the day over to the enemy. Man will either be ruled by God and His law or by man and his statutes.

After deliverance from slavery from the tyrant Pharaoh, God ordained a sabbatical rest for God's people (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). Of all the nations of the world, only Israel had a Sabbath; only God's people were free to rest. All other nations were slaves to work, to taskmasters, to debts, and to governments. Sabbath keeping contained the weekly duty of contemplating the meaning of freedom. Likewise, the Sabbath is unique to Christianity. The First-Day Sabbath is a jubilee—a proclamation of freedom from the bondage of sin and the call of man to seek political freedom.

The purpose of the Sabbath was for God's people *to reflect on their enslavement in Egypt* and their deliverance from bondage. Every seven days, Israel enjoyed their liberty and renewed their commitment to freedom by remembering their enslavement by an alien power, the misery of that servitude, and the cause of their imprisonment. The Sabbath reminded them of the evil of involuntary servitude. Sabbath reflection remembered God's deliverance, the necessity of His intervention, the cost of that intervention (blood), the power of that redemption, and the purpose of that redemption. Fifty-two weeks a year the Israelite man had to think about political freedom.

Likewise, the principle became a cornerstone of Christianity. First-Day Sabbath keeping is not only release from work, but a day to reflect on freedom. Blue laws are the result of early Christian influence in this country. Sunday Sabbath-keeping was an important fabric weaved into the historical blanket of this country. So much so, the canons of freedom thundered from the pulpits of this country prior to the revolutionary war. The rise of big government is directly proportional to the neglect of First-Day Sabbath keeping in America. Maybe this is the reason why Americans are enslaved through the tax system today. They do not consider the 4th Commandment and its implications. Consequently, we have more man-made laws and more people in prison than any country in the world. At best, most Americans only think about freedom once a year and most don't know the difference between freedom and the illusion of freedom.

God's loves freedom so much, He ordained a Sabbath every week; a special monthly Sabbath; three festival Sabbaths; a seven year Sabbath for debts; and a year of Jubilee so that man might be free to celebrate and enjoy His freedom under God's Law. Any dwelling on the evils of the past like the civil rights movement or the Indians of the American west keeps men in bondage and stifles their ability to cope with the future.

Involuntary servitude was forbidden. Humanists working through a de facto government have declared war on God's law and on the freedom of man by designing a debt based system that enslaves a man's labor for life. Capitalists that view people as human resources or human assets as means of wealth production is clearly criminal.

*Sunday 30th May is the date for UK taxpayers to raise a glass and celebrate Tax Freedom Day, the theoretical point in the year at which we stop working for the government and start working for ourselves\* . [http://www.tiscali.co.uk/money/features/tax\\_freedom\\_day.html](http://www.tiscali.co.uk/money/features/tax_freedom_day.html)*

Under God's laws debts could not last more than six years. No man had a right to mortgage his future indefinitely and no man or institution has a right to enslave a man perpetually. God wanted his people free and wealthy and able to lend to other nations. Because our society and bankers in particular have sinned against God by rejecting His Word, Americans find themselves in perpetual debt for houses, cars, and the necessities of life.

*"Christians cannot become slaves voluntarily; they are not to become the slaves of men (1 Corinthians 7:23), nor 'entangled' again with the yoke of bondage' (Galatians 5:1). The road of pseudo-security, of pseudo-liberation in slavery, socialism, and welfarism, is forbidden to the Christian. The Christian Sabbath is not the slavery of socialism" (Rushdoony, 1973, p. 137).*

Modern humanistic man thinks nothing of putting a man in prison for five, ten, twenty or thirty years of his life. Such human trafficking via the court and prison system in this country is not only against the laws of God, it is exceedingly cruel—a violation of the very principles of the Sabbath.

This author is not suggesting a reinstatement of Hebrews Sabbatical law in any nation, but he is suggesting the principle of the Sunday Sabbath-keeping should be practiced wherever Christ is proclaimed; that men accept the Lordship of Christ and reject enslavement by man-made governments; that freedom be the ambition of every man; that Christians resist the tyranny of their age by States hell-bent on controlling men from the womb to the tomb, from the cradle to the grave.

God calls us to freedom. "Resistance to tyranny is service to God" (Thomas Jefferson). Remembering the Sabbath is resistance to capitalistic tyranny as well as political tyranny. Freedom is despised by the greedy and the oppressive; therefore, Christians must demand the right to observe the Sabbath. Christians must resist the tendency to make Sunday a holiday instead of a holy day. Parents would do well to insist that sporting events for kids be scheduled for Monday through Saturday, but not on Sunday. Just as the Sabbath was a covenant sign to Israel (Exodus 20:10-13), Christians should reverence Sunday and sanctify it. It is, after all, a remembrance of the new covenant in Christ.

In conclusion, the Law is a direct reflection of the character of an eternal God and is binding on all men for all of time. Discontinuity of law centers around temporal, ceremonial enactments. The Torah must be rejected as a mediator and source of justification, but it must become the model of Law for a Christian society and the foundation of civil government. The Christians Sabbath is God's gracious gift for the health of man and for the sanctification of His people. To neglect the First-Day Sabbath is to waste one's soul; to follow the Hebrew Sabbath is clearly apostasy and a rejection of Christ and His accomplishments on the 8<sup>th</sup> Day Sabbath.

## **THEONOMY**

God's Law is not only good for Christians, it is good for all men and all of man's institutions. Not only must every Christian obey God's Law, so must every lawyer, banker, judge, and politician! In modern times, believers may embrace God's law privately, but often deny its applicability publically; that is, to politicians and government officials. Believers have retreated into a shell of private piety instead of

wielding the Sword of the Word against opponents in the amphitheater of political contests. If God's law is not the standard for political conduct, what is? Are men who are a law unto themselves qualified to rule others? Isn't his word sufficient? Sure it is, and for this reason Christians should advance the principles of Theonomy. Theonomy, meaning "God's Law," insists on the following applications of God's Law publically:

- That the Bible is the foundation of law, sufficient as the guide for public policy, and that the God of the Bible is the Source of law.
- That the Ten Commandments and explanatory case law is the standard of right and wrong; and, his law should be applied to the family, religion, and politics—socially, economically, and judicially.
- That not only are individuals accountable to God's law, so are civil rulers. The government to which the Christian is to submit is one where men acknowledge the Sovereignty of Christ and his law over them.
- That God's Word is the standard of legislation. If God's Law-word is not the standard of right and wrong, what is? Men are better civil servants when they know God's law and serve with a clear conscience. Theonomists do not want a "voice at the table," or "equal time." They want godless promoters of pornography, abortion, and Sodomy to be rounded up and punished according to God's Word. The whole idea that Christians must tolerate Sodomites and transvestites in the work place is offensive to the Christian mind. Civil law must have some standard to judge behavior. That standard will either be the sure Word of God or the capricious, derelict opinions of men.
- That law and government must be limited. While the proper application of law can cleanse society of evildoers, law cannot regenerate man or society. Regeneration is reserved for religion . . . and only the Christian gospel can transform man. More laws mean less freedom and more bondage. Therefore, Theonomists reject the idea that we need more and more laws to create a better society.
- That Christians should prefer Christian men as their civil servants. John Jay said, "Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty, as well as the privilege and interest, of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers."
- That we choose judges and rulers in light of the standards of God's Word—men who fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness (Exodus 18:21).
- That jail sentences and the commercial nature of the prison penal-systems, for-profit corporations, must be replaced with a Biblical system of justice: Biblical punishments, restitution to victims, corporal punishment, and capital punishment.
- That the Department of Education be dismantled, taken away from the federal government, and returned to the control of parents in local communities. The family and the church must bear the responsibility for training children.
- That government should restrain itself to Biblical purposes—the protection of human rights, the punishment of evildoers, and the promotion of good (1 Peter 2:14). Welfare programs must shift away from the government and return to the church and to the private sector where it belongs. Taxes on personal income must be eliminated. The state must stay within its limited purpose.

- That the State return to a Biblical standard of money, eliminate fraud in government, and refuse to steal from citizens in the name of taxation under color of law.
- That freedom of speech be properly defined in order to eliminate pornography as a “protected right.” The cursing God, blasphemy against God’s law-source, slander, and irresponsible speech must receive appropriate sanctions.

*All who are content with a humanistic law system and do not strive to replace it with Biblical law are guilty of idolatry. They have forsaken the covenant of their God, and they are asking us to serve other gods. They are thus idolaters, and are, in our generation, when our world is idolatrous and our states also, to be objects of missionary activity. They must be called out of their idolatry into the service of the living God. (R. J. Rushdoony, Law and Society: Volume II of the Institutes of Biblical Law; Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1982, pp. 468).*

In conclusion, the believer is set free from legalism, but he is not set free from a duty to obey Christ. The challenge of Law is one of continuity v. discontinuity. This problem can be solved when we realize that God is absolute and because His moral law is a reflection of His character, His moral law is absolute and binding on all men and their institutions.

## 91. THE CALL TO SUBMIT TO GODLY AUTHORITY

***Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.***

Government plays a big part in our lives. Nightly news is filled with reports on speeches by politicians, candidates running for office, legislation passed by Congress, police raids, internationally events that impact our lives, and developments in our cultural wars. Politicians are at work designing new ways to raid our pocket book. Unstable Islamic regimes threatens our security. Legislatures pass new laws that steal our freedoms; that is, the greatest threat to freedom is government!

Today governments promotes murder (abortion), homosexuality (immorality), and the equality of all religions (polytheism), divorce (adultery), war atrocities (Eisenhower death camps), secret medical experiments on its own people (Tuskagee), spying on Americans (NSA), and theft under color of law (the income tax). Government seeks to be a god to the people controlling “life (health care), liberty (legislative statutes), and property (deeds and building permits). While the Scriptures does not promote revolution, neither does it encourage obeisance to political regimes regardless of their character.

In recent times, pastors have used Romans 13 to teach unlimited obedience to the government—even urging their churches to become state “approved” religious organizations surrendering their de jure, God-given authority to the Internal Revenue Service and abandoning the Headship of Christ. This trend has produced namby-pamby, spineless, passive, effeminate Christians in the pew who do not have the moral backbone of a jelly-fish to confront the legal atrocities passed by Congress and enforced by BAR lawyers in the administrative branch of government. Sheeple fall into the hands of unscrupulous politicians whose agenda is immoral, tyrannical, and anti-Christian.



The atrocities of the Nazi Party occurred in part because the church in Germany failed to develop a wholistic Biblical theology of God and Government. Hitler's favorite passage in the Bible was Roman 13. Furthermore, it was the most expounded and talked about passage by the Lutheran Church during Hitler's reign of terror. Lutheran pastors used Romans 13 to encourage their flocks to submit to Nazi policy. American Evangelical pastors have fallen into the same error as the Germans.

Something is radically wrong with a church that fails to recognize tyranny, the propaganda of total compliance to unlimited police powers perpetuated by totalitarian rulers.

**Q:** What is a Christian to do when the government he is supposed to honor is the enemy of God's Law turned traitor to its own constitution?

**Q:** What is a Christian supposed to do when Christians who should be advocating obedience to Christ promote State policies in and through their 501 (c) (3) church/organizations?

**Q:** What is a believer supposed to do when Christians who should be supporting his resistance to the godless State join the State and target him for hostility?

Adolf Hitler said, "What luck for rulers that *Christian* men do not think." Well, Christians need to put on their thinking caps and get cerebral about Romans 13. Consider developing a complete, accurate theology of God and Government from the whole of Scripture. Consider the following correctives:

If Jesus is Lord, it is not possible or desirable to always obey the State.

All authority is limited. No authority is unlimited and that includes civil authority. An employer has a right to control his employees, but his position as boss doesn't give him the right to control their private lives. Likewise, with civil authority. Every power is limited and defined. When governments overstep their authority, it becomes the duty of men to resist.

Civil rulers have a duty to obey God's law.

Not only are Christians supposed to obey the law of God, governments are required to obey God's law! We have no fear of good government and good laws, but we have much to fear about bad government and bad laws. Government that over reaches its authority and does not stay within its limited jurisdiction is a government to be feared—not obeyed.

We hear much from the pulpit about a Christian's duty to obey the government, but the same pulpits are silent on the government's duty to obey the Lord Jesus Christ.

Modern preachers teach that it is the duty of Christians to submit to civil authority, but few teach is the duty of every government to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ and his Law? Why are preachers asking Christians to submit to pragmatic police states and not shouting from the roof tops that civil rulers have a duty to surrender to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ? Teaching unlimited support of a pagan, godless state produces a nation of timid, foolish Christians that are sheepish and subservient to authoritarian states.

If the United States Congress decide to resurrect the old monarchal custom of Jus Primae Noctis (Law of First Night)? That was the old medieval custom when the king claimed the right to sleep with a subject's bride on the first night of their marriage. Would our sincere Christian brethren sheepishly say, "Romans

Chapter 13 says we must submit to the government"? I think not. And would any of us respect any man who would submit to such a law?

A preacher who teaches that Christians should *always* obey their government takes no risks. It is much easier to teach Christian to *always* obey the state than it is to teach them when to disobey their government. It takes a Bible student and a Christian thinker to help believers discern when it is their duty to God to contravene against the state. *Resistance to tyranny is service to God* was the maxim Thomas Jefferson learned from listening to the Black Robe Regiment.

The “authorities” to which a Christian is encouraged to be subject is “God-ordained” authority.

The particle “except” in Romans 13:1 limits the kind of government to which Christians are to submit. Thus, the proper meaning of verse one is as follows: “There is no *legitimate* authority except of God.” Since the government is on His shoulders, Christ is the foundation of all de jure governments (Isaiah 9:6); but, since modern governments have declared war on God’s law order, they operate de facto, not de jure. Therefore, the obedient Christian will find himself at odds with the humanistic State.

Good government is ordained of God. God’s people are responsible to obey good government and good laws, but do Christians have a duty to obey bad laws and a bad government (Proverbs 29:2)? The conjunctive “*except*” or “*but*” (*ei me*) in Romans 13:1 means that the government God calls us to obey is one that is surrendered to Him. Surely, He is not calling us to obey a Hitler or Pol Pot or a Stalin. Surely He’s not calling us to support a government that murders children and promotes same-sex unions and plunders families in the name of taxation? Doesn’t the Bible warn us about governments that do mischief through law (Psalm 94:20)? Regimes like this must be resisted, not supported!

The adjective “*good*” must be assumed in verse three: “For *good* rulers are not a terror to good works” (13:3). God is not calling Christians to submit to an evil ruler that promotes wickedness, is He? A State that promotes abortion, multiculturalism, law enforcement, pornography, Sodomy, deviant sex education, and democratic communism has joined the rebellion of Psalm 2:1-2 and is not worthy of respect or obedience. Thomas Jefferson discovered this Biblical principal:

*“Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God.”*

*When injustice becomes law, rebellion becomes a duty (unknown).*

*When a government disobeys God’s law, Christian obedience to God will be perceived as treason against government.*

Not only can individuals sin against God, governments can sin against God regularly and consistently. The difference being that when a government sins, it has a Herculean impact on millions of people. Thus, statism morphs into despotism: the total subjugation of the total man to total government. Instead of submitting to tyranny, the prophets of old rebuked it (Isaiah 1; 5:8ff; 10:1-2; Hosea 4:1ff; Micah 6:2).

Nine of the Ten Commandments are negative—“*Thou shall not . . .*” That is, negative law limits government. Positive law opens the door to unlimited legislation. God’s law limits government; civil authority is limited and confined; therefore, obedience to any State must be limited and cautiously applied!! The whole idea that Christians have an unlimited duty to the State is a product of statism, not Christianity.

The purpose of government is not charity, but justice—that is, to defend the basic rights of man: life, liberty, and property. When a government abandons this purpose and seeks to duplicate the mission of the church (grace), it steps outside its jurisdiction and abandons its authority. It sins against God and must be restrained or replaced. Therefore, “that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness” (Declaration of Independence).

*"If the representatives of the people betray their constituents, there is then no recourse left but in the exertion of that original right of self-defense which is paramount to all positive forms of government, and which against the usurpations of the national rulers may be exerted with infinitely better prospect of success than against those of the rulers of an individual State. In a single State, if the persons entrusted with supreme power become usurpers, the different parcels, subdivisions, or districts of which it consists, having no distinct government in each, can take no regular measures for defense. The citizens must rush tumultuously to arms, without concert, without system, without resource; except in their courage and despair." (Alexander Hamilton, Federalist No. 28)*

When a government seeks to be omniscient by collecting information about the names of citizens, occupations, and incomes of its citizens, it seeks the status of deity among men. Statism is the belief that government is god; that government is the source of all goodness, wisdom, and power; that government should provide for the people; that the people's highest duty is to serve the state. This is Moloch<sup>94</sup> worship, devotion to the State, and it is clearly idolatrous. Totalitarian states must be resisted, not obeyed! Even Egyptian midwives understood they had a duty to disobey Pharaoh's totalitarian order to abort the birth of Hebrew children.

It is hard for some to disobey bad government and bad laws (Psalm 94:20; Isaiah 10:1-2). At times it is much easier to teach Christians to always obey the State than to teach them when and how to disobey an overreaching government. Christ's purpose for Christians is to be “the salt of the earth,” not honey-coated, fawning sycophants.

It is sinful and rebellious to disobey good government and good laws, but it is not sinful and rebellious to State laws is obedience to God (See the three Hebrews in Daniel's time).

If the State cannot be resisted in the minds of Christians, then the state has become a god! The man that is more concerned about pleasing government than pleasing God commits idolatry. Too many Christians diminish their tithe in times of stress, but would never think of not paying the godless income tax.

While individual Christians have a very limited duty to obey the state, the church is under the headship of Christ and has **no** duty to the State but common sense docility. The church has its own jurisdiction, its own mission, and its own authority. At no time is the church required to become a state church, a 501 c 3 organization, or obtain permission from the state to carry out its mission. When a church seeks to be

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<sup>94</sup> The title “*Molock*” uses the vowels of shame to describe government where the king is considered a god wherein the citizen has a duty to serve, worship, and sacrifice for the king. The name for king in Israel was “*meleck*,” but Israel's kings had a duty to serve the LORD God.

incorporated by the authority of the state, it abandons the authority of Christ and commits idolatry. Chuck Baldwin said this about State churches,

*Then-Senator Lyndon Baines Johnson devised what has proven to be a brilliant strategy in which to silence and neuter America's churches. His bill, which created the 501c3 tax-exempt corporation status for churches back in 1954, has, over the decades, effectively muted America's pulpits. The vast majority of churches today are thoroughly and completely intimidated by the threat of losing their tax-exempt status under the 501c3 section of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC). As a result, the vast majority of pastors are unwilling to address virtually any issue from the pulpit that could be deemed as political.*

*Add to the fear of losing tax-exempt status the egregiously slavish interpretation of Romans 13 -- that Christians and churches must submit to civil government no matter what -- and a very legitimate argument can be made that Mr. Johnson not only silenced and neutered America's churches, but that he has, in effect, turned them into agents of the state. More and more, the federal government is using pastors and churches to promote its big-government agenda. (Chuck Baldwin, "Have Churches Become Agents of the State," October 31, 2013)*

The legal head of the church is Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:18; 2:4-10); the legal head of a federally incorporated *church organization* is the IRS! Why are pastors surrendering to Satan? Churches would do well to obey the Scripture, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, says the Lord" (1 Corinthians 6:17). This is a great order from the Commander, not a great suggestion.

The evil which the Christian are to avoid and the good he which he is required to embrace in Romans 13:4 is "good" as defined by God's law. When men define "good," they end up protecting evil. Good does not mean embracing every statute and regulation promoted by the State. When the State calls evil good, it turns the world on its head (Romans 1:19ff).

The president is not king and Christians have no duty to obey Washington D.C. America is unique in that it does not have a monarch. It is supposed to be a republic. The president is not commander and chief of the American people, but commander and chief of the armed forces. In America, the government is not a king. It is not sovereign. It is a servant-government bound by the Constitution. Congress only has 18 powers and **none** of them include making laws for private citizens. The Constitution does **not** embrace **democracy** which is "communism or negation of property rights." When Christians trust government, hope in government, appeal to government for benefits they not only betray their own Constitution but they betray the Lord Jesus Christ.

In American, the first duty of citizenship is not to submit to authority, but to question authority.

Christians have **no** duty to obey a government that ignores its own constitution, its own laws, and engages in ultra vires acts. In fact, doesn't the Scripture warn believers about trusting government officials (Psalm 118:8-9)? Government is **not** god **nor** a savior nor our Lord. It is **not** our hope. Government was never intended to remake society, redistribute wealth, or control mankind. Its sole purpose is to protect man's liberties and provide limited protection to a free people (See the Declaration of Independence).

There is a difference between lawful and legal. It was legal to kill undesirables in Nazi Germany, but it was not lawful. Something lawful reflects God's will; something legal reflects the man's will. "Law" in America is nothing more than the will of the master for its slaves (U.S. citizens). God's law restrains evil and liberates man; man's law tolerates evil and enslaves man. God's law is negative, thereby confining

the purpose of government. Man's law is positive, thereby granting unrestrained power to government—power that must be resisted.

The State can only tax that which it creates. The church is not created by the State and has no duty to the State. While individual Christians have a duty to pay lawful taxes, the church has no duty to pay taxes, to reveal its records, or to cooperate in any way with the IRS.<sup>95</sup> *Nowhere in Scripture does God require the church treasurer to be **an uncompensated tax collector for the State—that treason to Christ!!***

A board that pretends to act for God and then turns over church funds to Caesar has betrayed Christ and is a double agent, a Judas, in the most pathetic sense. The First Amendment erects a wall of separation between church and state and the church would do better to decouple itself from State control.

The Scripture warns against sophisticated schemes to steal a man's house and property (10<sup>th</sup> Commandment). Just as it is wrong for a man to steal from his neighbor, it is sin for government to steal from its citizens under color of law. The greatest thefts in history have been in the name of taxation. A Christian should pay the taxes he legitimately owes, but he has no duty to pay taxes he does not owe. To know what taxes a Christian must pay, he must consult the Constitution and the written laws created by Congress and recorded in the Federal Register. A Christian has no duty to pay taxes not required by written law. A Christian may pay taxes out of conscience because the law requires it, but at times he pays taxes out fear because power requires it; that is, when tyranny is at work.

The Bible does not promote revolution. We do not want to get rid of government; we want to get rid of evil in government. We are not against good rulers; we are against godless rulers. We are not against the *rule of law*, but we are against the *rule by law*. We support the rule of law, but we must resist the arbitrary rule of men. We are not against Christians submitting to good law, but we are against citizens that are willing to trade blind obedience and silent submission for the promise of specious protection. While Romans thirteen supplies general instruction on the authority of civil government and the duty of citizens to be generally subject to those powers, **the whole of Scripture does not support unlimited obedience to any State.**

The issue is not whether Jesus is Lord, but will men acknowledge His Lordship; not whether men should obey the State, but whether the State will obey God.

When a State sees itself as a god, the source of law, and rejects Christ and the Scriptures as authoritative, then the State must be resisted and eventually rebuilt on principles consistent with the Law of God. After all God's law is not just for men, but for all men and all of man's institutions.

## 92. **THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP**

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<sup>95</sup> He owes no duty to the State or to his neighbors to divulge his business, or to open his doors to an investigation, so far as it may tend to criminate him. He owes no such duty to the State, since he receives nothing therefrom beyond the protection of his life and property (*Hale v. Henkel* - 201 U.S. 43 (1906)).

*“We need a baptism of seeing” (A.W. Tozer)*

In conclusion, the gospel is about the good news that Jesus is the Christ; that His history is certain and true; that His history has meaning for all men; that his work on the cross and at the right hand of God today effects the believer with the benefits of His kingdom reign; and that it is good news, we know what pleases God.

***Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.***

***2 Timothy 2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.***

Paul had a premonition he was going to die at the hands of Caesar. Knowing his ministry was coming to an end, he calls Timothy to engage the process of discipleship.

### **DISCOVER THE NEED FOR VISION**

When the U.S. grappled Kuwait away from Iraq, the military strategy was to shell the Iraqi radar, radio, and communications systems. One might think, the priority should have been to bomb an air base, but not so. The strategy was powerful and effective: blind Iraq! By destroying the communications system, Iraq could not detect U.S. aircraft. Likewise, Satan’s first strategy is to blind the Christian. Our Lord taught 20/20 spiritual vision was essential for spiritual success when He said: “If your eyes are bad, your whole body is full of darkness” (Matthew 6:22).

A.W. Tozer said we need a baptism of seeing. Charles Arn, a church growth consultant stated about growing Sunday Schools: Above all else, is to see clearly the supreme purpose to which we are called.

- Vision is necessary for achieving our life purpose. Our Lord had a spiritual focus: “He saw the crowds . . . harassed, helpless . . .” (Matthew 9:36).
- Vision is necessary for discipleship. When seeking to expand the vision of the disciples, Jesus commanded his men to “lift up your eyes . . . the fields are ripe unto harvest” (John 4:35).
- Vision is necessary to sustain our spiritual focus when going through the moonless nights of severe trials. Moses “endured as seeing Him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27).

### **DISCOVER THE MEANING OF DISCIPLESHIP**

Discipleship is not the same as friendship, though many become friends in the process of discipleship. It is not a social interchange of current events or personal experiences. It is not congregational worship or business meeting. Discipleship is not just evangelism. Evangelism is a part of discipleship. Preaching is not discipleship, though discipleship may include preaching. ***Discipleship is God entrusting mature men with the content of the Gospel who will pass it on to men of integrity who, in turn, will pass it on to other trustworthy men.***

Discipleship can be compared to a relay race. The gospel is like a *baton* which athletes must pass to the next runner efficiently in order to win the race. The race is won or lost in the exchanging the baton. In the

relay race, the possibility of winning is not achieved until the fourth man across the finish line with the same baton.

Note the four generations in this passage: **Paul, Timothy, faithful men, others.** Paul called Timothy to look for faithful men. To hand them the baton of the gospel so they would in turn hand the gospel on to others.

Likewise, the work of discipleship is not complete until the disciplemaker sees a *4th generation* Christian handing off the **gospel baton**.

### **DISCOVER THE CONTENT OF DISCIPLESHIP**

What are we supposed to pass on to faithful men? The answer, of course, is the five pillars of Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul was not asking Timothy to pass on his favorite devotions, or illuminating stories, or an exegesis of Malachi. He wanted Timothy to take the gospel that was given to him and to pass it on IN TACT, nothing added and nothing deleted, to faithful men. He didn't ask Timothy to teach everyone the whole Bible. While the Bible is wonderful, there are not enough life times to pass on our knowledge of the whole Bible to faithful men. But, we can help the next generation build their ministry on the five pillars of the gospel: The person of Christ, the History of Christ, the Meaning of that History, the Effects of that History on those who believe, and the response to God in faith and obedience.

### **DISCOVER THE METHOD OF DISCIPLESHIP**

**God's method of discipleship** is not programs, not organizations, not technology, not money, but people! He does not use angels, or talking rabbits -- only men! E.M. Bounds, the great student of prayer, said: *What is needed is not better methods, but better men.* Martin Luther, the Reformer said: *Without Him we cannot; without us, He will not.*

Dr. Charles Arn, in interviewing 10,000 people, asked this question: "What was responsible for your coming to Christ?" Here was his answer: special need (2%), walk in (3%), pastor (6%), program (3%), evangelistic crusade (1/2 of 1%), friends or relatives (79%). When Dr. Arn studied church dropouts, he found that 87% did not have an honest, interaction experience with another Christian about the gospel -- that is, they lacked genuine contact and conversations with a genuine, knowledgeable, caring Christian friend. Arn also observed that the average new, active church member had 5.79 different Christian influences prior to their commitment (Leadership Magazine, Spring, 1984).

There is a story about the day Jesus ascended in heaven. When our Lord arrived, He was met by all the angels. One finally spoke and questioned Jesus, "Master, that was a great thing you did for men on earth. You obeyed the Father even unto death and redeemed mankind from the penalty of sin. Your resurrection is proof of the blessing of their justification. How are men going to know about your wonderful love toward them?" Jesus answered, "I have trained 12 men to go into all the world and to make disciples." "But," replied the angel, "what if those 12 men fail, get discouraged, or become preoccupied with earthly cares?" Jesus responded, "I HAVE NO OTHER PLAN!"

Imagine: No other plan? What if we lose the vision, become tired, sidetracked, or derailed? **There is no other plan!**

**God's method is beautiful people.** Note the *two seeds* in Matthew 13. In the first parable, the seed is the word of God; in the second parable the seed is "sons of the kingdom." God's method, therefore, is God

chosen men (seeds) preaching God's word (the seed). The first strategy of evangelism then, is to be attractive, winsome, and whole. Others must be able to see the difference between the wheat (beautiful Christians) and the tares. It was not just Jesus' message that was so powerful, it was the man. His life was a visual aid. Jesus' life was "the light of men" (John 1:4). Likewise, our life must be a light to men.

The Greeks described beauty as *ethos*. That is, beautiful people possessed character and integrity. And, for the Christians, *ethos* is necessary to gain a hearing. Our message (*logos*) must be preached by a beautiful men (*ethos*) in a context of love (*pathos*). *Discipleship is not something we do, it is also something we are.*

Dr. Joe Alderidge, evangelist, put it this way: believers must be committed to two parallel principles: (1) *radical holiness* (*ethos* with a difference), and (2) *radical identification* (contact with pre-Christians).

God's method is not only a man (*ethos*) with a message (*logos*), **but beautiful men (plural) working together to advance the gospel**. There is power in teamwork: "And five of you shall chase an hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight" (Leviticus 26:8). C.T. Studd (missionary to China) said of his work: *It was not our labor . . . but the coming together that ignited the work.*

Paul had this in mind when he exhorted the fractured Philippians:

*Philippians 1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ . . . that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*

### **THE MARKS OF TRUE DISCIPLESHIP**

The most influential book in my early life was "True Discipleship," by William McDonald, former President of Emmaus Bible School.

I've prayed with the man, walked with him, and listen to him speak many times. We are pleased to present a portion of his work here and encourage all our readers to purchase his book and to reflect on what it means to be a true disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Once I was over at his one room apartment seeking guidance on how to follow Christ. His apartment had a chair, a couch, some bookshelves full of books, and a small dining table set for four. Glancing at an open closet, I saw a few suits, a hand full of shirts, and three pairs of shoes neatly arranged.

Bill shared with me how he was on his way to being a millionaire when the Lord, through His Word, led him to sell all his "treasures," and give his stash of cash to missionaries, and to live by faith.

He never changed. He lived simply and sacrificially for Christ writing and preaching the rest of his life.

Here is a man that practiced what he preached! He died as he had lived, a true disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Enjoy His work on "True Discipleship" and may the Lord give you faith to deny yourself, take up your cross, and to follow Him (BRS).



“Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”” Mark 9:35NIV

The pathway to true discipleship begins when a person is born again. It begins when the following events take place:

When a person realizes that he is sinful, lost, blind and naked before God.

. When he acknowledges that he cannot save himself by good character or good works.

When he believes that the Lord Jesus Christ died as his Substitute on the Cross.

When by a definite decision of faith, he acknowledges Jesus Christ as his only Lord and Savior. This is how a person becomes a Christian. It is important to emphasize this at the outset.

Too many people think that you become a Christian by living a Christian life. NOT at all!

You must first become a Christian before you can live the Christian life.

The life of discipleship outlined in the following pages is a supernatural life. We do not have the power in ourselves to live it. We need divine power. Only when we are born again do we receive the strength to live as Jesus taught. Before reading any further, ask yourself the question, “Have I ever been born again? Have I become a child of God by faith in the Lord Jesus?” If you have not, receive Him now as your Lord and Savior. Rather, He seeks those who will give Him first place in their lives.

“He looks today, as He has ever looked, not for crowds drifting aimlessly in His track, but for individual men and women whose undying allegiance will spring from their having recognized that He wants those who are prepared to follow the path of self-renunciation which He trod before them”<sup>1</sup>—H. A. Evan Hopkins.

Nothing less than unconditional surrender could ever be a fitting response to His sacrifice at Calvary. Love so amazing, so divine, could never be satisfied with less than our souls, our lives, our all. The Lord Jesus made stringent demands on those who would be His disciples—demands that are all but overlooked in this day of luxury living. Too often we look upon Christianity as an escape from hell and a guarantee of heaven. Beyond that, we feel that we have every right to enjoy the best that this life has to offer. We know that there are those strong verses on discipleship in the Bible, but we have difficulty reconciling them with our ideas of what Christianity should be. We can accept the fact that soldiers give their lives for patriotic reasons.

We do not think it strange that Communists give their lives for political reasons. But that “blood, sweat and tears” should characterize the life of a follower of Christ somehow seems remote and hard to grasp. And yet the words of the Lord Jesus are clear enough. There is scarcely any room for misunderstanding if we accept them at their face value. Here are the terms of discipleship as laid down by the Savior of the world:

## **THE SEVEN MARKS OF TRUE DISCIPLESHIP**

William McDonald, True Discipleship.

### **1. A supreme love for Jesus Christ.**

***“If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26).***

This does not mean that we should ever have animosity or ill-will in our hearts toward our relatives, but it does mean that our love to Christ should be so great that all other loves are hatred by comparison. Actually, the most difficult clause in this passage is the expression, “yea, and his own life also.” Self-love is one of the stubbornest hindrances to discipleship. Not until we are willing to lay down our very lives for Him are we in the place where He wants us.

### **2. A denial of self.**

***“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself...” (Matthew 16:24).***

Denial of self is not the same as self-denial. The latter means foregoing certain foods, pleasures, or possessions. But denial of self means such complete submission to the lordship of Christ that self has no rights or authority at all. It means that self-abdicates the throne. It is expressed in the words of Henry Martyn, “Lord, let me have no will of my own, or consider my true happiness as depending in the smallest degree on anything that can befall me outwardly, but as consisting altogether in conformity to Thy will.

*“My glorious Victor, Prince divine, Clasp these surrendered hands in Thine, At length my will is all thine own, Glad vassals of a Saviour’s throne.” H. G. C. Moule*

### **3. A deliberate choosing of the cross.**

***“If any man come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross...” (Matthew 16:24).***

The cross is not some physical infirmity or mental anguish; these things are common to all men. The cross is a pathway that is deliberately chosen. It is “a path which so far as this world goes is one of dishonour and reproach”—C. A. Coates. The cross symbolizes the shame, persecution and abuse which the world heaped upon the Son of God, and which the world will heap on all who choose to stand against the tide. Any believer can avoid the cross simply by being conformed to the world and its ways.

### **4. A life spent in following Christ.**

***“If any man come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24).***

To understand what this means, one need simply ask himself, “What characterized the life of the Lord Jesus?” It was a life of obedience to the will of God. It was a life lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. It was a life of unselfish service for others. It was a life of patience and longsuffering in the face of the gravest wrongs. It was a life of zeal, of expenditure, of self-control, of meekness, of kindness, of faithfulness and of devotion (Galatians 5:22, 23). In order to be His disciples, we must walk as He walked. We must exhibit the fruit of Christ-likeness (John 15:8).

### **5. A fervent love for all who belong to Christ.**

***“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).***

This is the love that esteems others better than oneself. It is the love that suffers long and is kind. It vaunts not itself and is not puffed up. It does not behave itself unseemly; seeks not its own, is not easily provoked; thinks no evil. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Without this love, discipleship would be a cold, legalistic asceticism.

6. An unswerving continuance in His Word.

***“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed” (John 8:31).***

For real discipleship there must be continuance. It is easy enough to start well, to burst forth in a blaze of glory. But the test of reality is endurance to the end. Any man who looks back after putting his hand to the plow is not fit for the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62). Spasmodic obedience to the Scriptures will not do. Christ wants those who will follow Him in constant, unquestioning obedience.

*Keep me from turning back.*

*The handles of my plough with tears are wet,*

*The shears with rust are spoiled, and yet, and yet,*

*My God! My God! Keep me from turning back.*

7. A forsaking of all to follow Him.

***“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33).***

This is perhaps the most unpopular of all Christ’s terms of discipleship, and may well prove to be the most unpopular verse in the Bible. Clever theologians can give you a thousand reasons why it does not mean what it says, but simple disciples drink it down eagerly, assuming that the Lord Jesus knew what He was saying. What is meant by forsaking all? It means an abandonment of all one’s material possessions that are not absolutely essential and that could be used in the spread of the gospel.

The man who forsakes all does not become a shiftless loafer; he works hard to provide for the current necessities of his family and himself. But since the passion of his life is to advance the cause of Christ, he invests everything above current needs in the work of the Lord and leaves the future with God. In seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, he believes that he will never lack food and clothing. He cannot conscientiously hold on to surplus funds when souls are perishing for want of the gospel. He does not want to waste his life accumulating riches that will fall into the devil’s hands when Christ returns for His saints. He wants to obey the Lord’s injunction against laying up treasure on earth. In forsaking all, he offers what he cannot keep anyway, and what he has ceased to love.

## **THE MOTIVATION OF DISCIPLESHIP**

**Discipleship is motivated by the mercies of God.**

***Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.***

Salvation was graciously given; therefore, our service should be graciously rendered. Grace, not law, fuels the flame of Gospel ministry.

**Discipleship is motivated by the love of Christ:**

*John 21:17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

Christ did not ask Peter if he loved sheep, but if he love Him?

Christ did not ask Peter if he loved sheep work, but did he love Him?

The discipler must not be motivated by the fear of sheep, but the fear of Christ; not by the demands of sheep, but the commands of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:11).

**Discipleship is motivated by joy:** The joy of Christ: “. . . for the joy set before Him . . .” (Hebrews 12:2). One must ask, “Why should I give my time and energy and money for sheep? The time, the work, the heartache . . . is it worth it? Jesus looked forward to the joy of the conquest.

**Discipleship is motivated by rewards:** The reward of Christ: His “well done” (Matthew 25:21) will make it all worthwhile. There is a reward for those who pour their lives into others (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

**Discipleship is motivated by the needs of the harvest.**

*Matthew 9:27 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.*

Jesus saw the humanity as a field ready for harvest. The needs were many, and the harvesters were few. Christians are many, but only about 15 % ever lead another person to Christ (Fuller Seminary: Church Growth statistic). Of those 15%, only a handful have the capacity to fully disciple another individual into Christian maturity. Need, therefore, may be a legitimate motivation. Need, however, should never be the sole basis of a calling. Needs will always abound (John 12:8). However, it is comforting to know that our gifts might be used to meet legitimate needs.

**Discipleship is motivated by compassion:**

*“And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick” (Matthew 14:14-23).*

Jesus saw the needs of the people: “This is a desert place” (Matthew 14:15).

The disciples possessed a “send them away” attitude (Matthew 14:15; 15:23).

Jesus burgeoned with compassion for people (John 14:14).

Discipleship is born out of compassion for people. When a believer starts his spiritual journey with Christ he begins as a *consumer*, when he is mature, he becomes a *converter* of people.

### **Three Needs in Discipleship**

**Ethos:** Discipleship demands credibility (Integrity).

**Pathos:** Discipleship demands a compassion (the context of love).

**Logos:** Discipleship demands content (the gospel message).

Compassion becomes all that more important as one reflects on the eternal realities of judgment, hell, and eternity (Rev. 21). What kind of person would you be if you had the cure for cancer, and kept the secret hidden away in your medicine cabinet? What kind of Christian are you if you know the realities of hell, and you don't share Christ with those you know and love?

## **DISCOVER THE POWER OF DISCIPLESHIP**

Discipleship is the conduit for passing on the truths of the gospel to faithful men and women for Christ. Jesus preached to the multitude, but he invested in the twelve. Likewise, we must do the same. Today, people in America are over sold. What is needed is a close, personal model of what a Christian should be. People need "to see" it before "they see" it. While some may see the need for more preaching to the multitude, the deeper need in the American church is for more discipleship. What young Christian men need is not more preaching, but more individual and small group training. Christians should therefore be interested in multiplication as well as addition. He has, after all, provided supernatural resources through His Spirit to multiply disciples (Acts 1:8).

### **DISCOVER THE MEANS OF DISCIPLESHIP**

**Q:** What is the most important thing a baby needs to live? The answer: a family. If a child has a family, he will receive love, food, and care.

**Q:** What is the most important thing an arm needs? Answer: a body. If an arm has a body, it will receive blood, oxygen, and nutrients.

**Q:** What is the most important thing a soldier needs? The answer: an army. If a soldier has an army, he will have weapons, supplies, and support.

**Q:** What is the most important thing a new Christian needs? The answer: a church. If a new Christian has a church, he will find love, food for the soul, and support.

Discipleship needs to be in the context of the church. Jesus' strategy for worldwide conquest was the church (Matthew 16:16ff). Nothing is more important than the local church. Nations are a "drop in the bucket" and as "dust of the scales" (Isaiah 40:15), but the church is the "pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:16). Raising children to maturity, therefore, is a family project.

**Conclusion:** Discipleship begins with a vision. A.W Tozer once said, "We need a baptism of seeing." Where there is no vision for discipleship, the people perish (Proverbs. 29:18). By making the above discoveries, the vision of discipleship will be planted, and a harvest is sure to come. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation and if presented simply and correctly, it will bear fruit for the glory of God.

## 93. THE CALL TO WAR

***2 Corinthians 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)***

***ESV Judges 3:2 It was only in order that the generations of the people of Israel might know war, to teach war to those who had not known it before.***

### WAR AND THE GOSPEL

***Colossians 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.***

Christians are engaged in a battle of ideas. Whose ideas will prevail—the ideas of Zionists or the ideas of Christianity? Likewise, this war involves a fight for morality. Whose morals will rule society: the morals of evolutionary atheists or Christian morality? Since all morals are based on religion, we are in a great conflict about whose religion will govern society: the religion of humanists or the cults or the Christian religion? The Scripture informs us that God is a Warrior; that the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea; that Christ came not to bring peace, but a sword; that He entered this world to conquer men and to bring them into his kingdom; that his church was to be his battle ax at the gates of hell. Jude taught us to earnestly contend for the faith. Paul ordered the Colossians to be alert and to make sure believers were not entrapped by intellectual movements circulating in their day. Paul observed a weakness in Christians—a sappy tolerance of philosophies opposed to the gospel. When Christians prefer peace instead of war, they become shockingly sheepish, compliant, and servile to God’s enemies!

### PASS THE SALT

The Lord called his early disciples the salt of the earth. Today, Christians have more sugar than a candy factory. Because Christians have been eating too many Whooper Kaboom Sugar Bombs for breakfast, they’ve lost their “snap, crackle, pop” in gospel proclamation. Government officials are no longer threatened by the Christian community.

When Christians were baptized in the early church, the bishop placed a pinch of salt on the tongue of each new convert. Salt reminded the communicants that they needed to be salt, not sugar; that life was hard; that because they are salt they may be called to die for the gospel? (Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, Volume I).

Pass the salt, please.

### WAR IS PART OF GOD’S WILL

When people are asked what they most wish for the answer is usually “world peace.” But, how can there be peace when tyrants are in office assassinating enemies, killing their own people, and promoting Sodomy and other forms of wickedness? There is no peace without the prince of peace. Peace on earth and good will to men does not come by secular governments, but by Jesus Christ. He came not to bring peace to a world at war with his Law-word, but to bring a sword and cause a division between the sons of light and the sons of darkness.

*Matthew 10:34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

*Psalm 143:10 Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.*

*Psalm 144:1 Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight:*

*Jeremiah 51:20 Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms;*

*1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith,*

The psalmist prays, “*Teach me to do your will.*” Have you ever thought that it is God’s will that you learn to fight; that the reason you are having so many conflicts in life is to teach you to stand up for what is right and to resist what is wrong?

Notice that David declared that it was God who taught his hands to war. It was God who taught him how to use a sling, weld a sword, and shoot a bow. God taught him to be a killer of lawbreakers. And, it is God’s will that all of us would know how to fight against the powers of darkness.

God had a purpose for saving Israel out of Egypt and that purpose was to be **a weapon of justice**. He didn’t call them to be a breakfast factory to produce mango passion, peach, honey-roasted, frosted-flake breakfast cereals. He called Israel His “battle ax.” Think of it— God’s people a Battle Ax! He redeemed them from Egypt. Brought them to Mount Sinai to learn His law. Organized them into a redemptive community. Called up all men twenty-years of age and older and arranged them into military units to use them as his hammer against the Canaanites. The Spirit declared that the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9). Our Warrior-King claims earth as His dominion. He redeems men by His grace and He executes others by His justice. Consequently, the church must learn war. Christians are called to learn methods of war, to fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12), and to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 2:3).

### **WAR IS NOT ALWAYS EVIL**

*Exodus 15:3 The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name . . . Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea.*

Immediately following Israel’s deliverance at the Red Sea, Miriam burst into song commemorating the destruction of the Egyptians. But, before we look at the text, imagine with me what it would be like to be on the eastern shores of the Red Sea. The nation had traveled between two walls of water pursued by the most powerful army in the world. When God collapsed the barricade, the entire Egyptian army drown under the thrashing waves. Bodies of men and horses floated on the sea shore to the wonder of the sons of Jacob. Stunned by the power of Almighty God, Miriam penned her enlightenment: “The LORD is a man of war . . .”

The experience at the Red Sea branded a new truth on their soul. Our God is a Man of War; i.e. He is a hunter—a terrifying adversary—a fierce Fighter—a military Assassin—a vicious, ruthless Killing Machine. The nation learned that He was greater than the taskmasters, greater than Egypt’s generals, greater than Pharaoh, and more powerful than all man’s mighty armies. He is sovereign. There’s a lesson

for us here: We aren't following a docile, frilly-nilly, sugar-coated, honey-lipped, namby-pamby cream puff . . . but a terrifying Warlord!

If God wages war against evil men, then war is not always evil. It is an instrument of cleansing society and of subduing rebels. His wars are not just defensive, but offensive. He ordered the destruction of the Canaanites even though the Canaanites had done Israel no harm to Jacob. He ordered the priests to wage war against Midian in an offensive maneuver to decimate that idolatrous nation (Numbers 33). The last time the word "war" is mentioned in Scripture is in relation to Jesus Christ coming on a white horse to make war against the beast and rebel nations that reject his authority (Revelation 19:19). Sweet Jesus is a Warlord and He's meaner than a pair of scissors in a tailor shop. He destroys armies, humbles kings, and executes rebels. Without sounding trite, Miriam learned *the LORD is His name and war is His game*.

### **TEACH THEM WAR**

*Judges 3:1-2 Now these are the nations that the LORD left, to test Israel by them, that is, all in Israel who had not experienced all the wars in Canaan. **It was only in order that the generations of the people of Israel might know war, to teach war** to those who had not known it before.*

The events in the Book of Judges occurred during the Late Bronze Age (1500-1200 B.C.) after the second generation of Israelites entered conquered Canaan. As that generation passed, the Lord announced that He was not going to drive out all the Canaanites all at once but leave part of them in the land of Canaan so the following generations might learn war. Without war, wickedness takes root downward and mushrooms upward poisoning civilizations. Without war, Christian folk become effeminate, cowardly, and servile. The Lord left enemy nations in the land like a bad virus testing Israel's health; that is, testing their obedience to Him. War was the means of building a nation useful to the LORD God.

We do not have two Bibles: an Old Testament Bible and a New Testament Bible. There is one Bible, and the Bible teaches us to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ and to learn the art of war.

*2 Timothy 2:3 . . . endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*

It is the duty of Christians to learn to obey, to use His tools of war, to fight holy battles, to know their enemy, to gain legal and military skills, to know the rules of war, to engage the enemy . . . and to know "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Notice this text, "the gates of hell." Before us is the church militant takin' it to the rebels of law and order.

### **THINGS WORSE THAN WAR**

*War is an ugly thing, **but not the ugliest of things**. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself. ([John Stuart Mill](#) English economist & philosopher (1806 - 1873))*

John Mill's observations is absolutely correct. There is nothing more pathetic than men who do not recognize evil in the world, who think all people are born good, who believe in peace at any price, and who will not stand up and fight when his family and friends are being devoured by political wolves.



## **UNWILLINGNESS TO FIGHT**

***Exodus 13:17 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:***

A warrior mindset is something one has to learn. Unwillingness to fight is a weakness to overcome. It was eleven days journey along the sea coast from the Nile of Egypt to southern boundaries of Canaan. God did not lead them directly into Canaan to face hostile forces. He saw a weakness in the young nation and that was the fear of war. The sons of Jacob served Pharaoh as slaves for hundreds of years. They were ignorant, obsequious, fawning cowards. All they had ever known was servitude and obnoxious compliance to kings and taskmasters. In taking them to Canaan the short route, there was a danger the nation would buckle and return to Egypt if they had to fight. Surrender was not in the plan of God. Therefore, God led them toward the Red Sea and out of Egypt. He enrolled them in basic training to prepare a holy army.

Even after a year of basic training in God's law and war courses, the nation held a war protest. When the spies brought back a report on the strength and weakness of the enemy, the nation cowered and rebelled against their Commander. They refused to fight. God deployed that generation and executed them in the desert over the next forty years. It was fight or die, and they died in the wilderness.

However, after 40 years of discipline, the second generation was ready to obey and willing to fight. They crossed the Jordan, marched on Jericho, erected a monument to declare the new law of the land, and the rest is history.

## **WAR IS NECESSARY**

*Psalms 110:1 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*

*Psalms 139:19-24 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

*Psalms 21:8-13 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform. Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them. Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power.*

God has ordained death and destruction upon His enemies.

David was not a liberal idealist that believe men were born good. He did not bifurcate sin from the man, to love the sinner and to hate the sin. He knew there was evil in the world; that evil was not in the

environment, but in men. He understood that wicked men existed, rose to power, and used their positions to steal property and to crush God's people. He calls them the "wicked" in this verse -- rebels against God's law order; sinners eating from the fruit of the poisonous tree. Because David had aligned himself with God's law order, God's enemies became his enemies. He hated them. Hate is a virtue when your enemies are also God's enemies.

**War is the business of God's people.** Both the saving of life and the taking of life is a duty of man. While love is an answer to some things, it is not the answer to all things. While grace can save the sinner, the proper use of the death penalty can rid society of evil men. God did not permit a class of delinquents to develop in the nation. He order lawbreakers to be killed. In this way, society was cleansed of evil men. War is nothing more than the mass application of capital punishment upon a nation of evildoers. Kill enough of 'em and the rest will submit. War, therefore, is necessary because it purges society of lawbreakers. War is necessary because men do not appreciate that which they do not have to sweat for, work for, and bleed for.

### **GRAPES OF WRATH**

*Isaiah 5:3-5; 5:8-6:5 Judge between me and my vineyard . . . I expected grapes but it produced worthless ones . . . now let me tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge . . . and it will be crushed . . . trampled to the ground . . . Woe, Woe, Woe, Woe, Woe, Woe, Woe.*

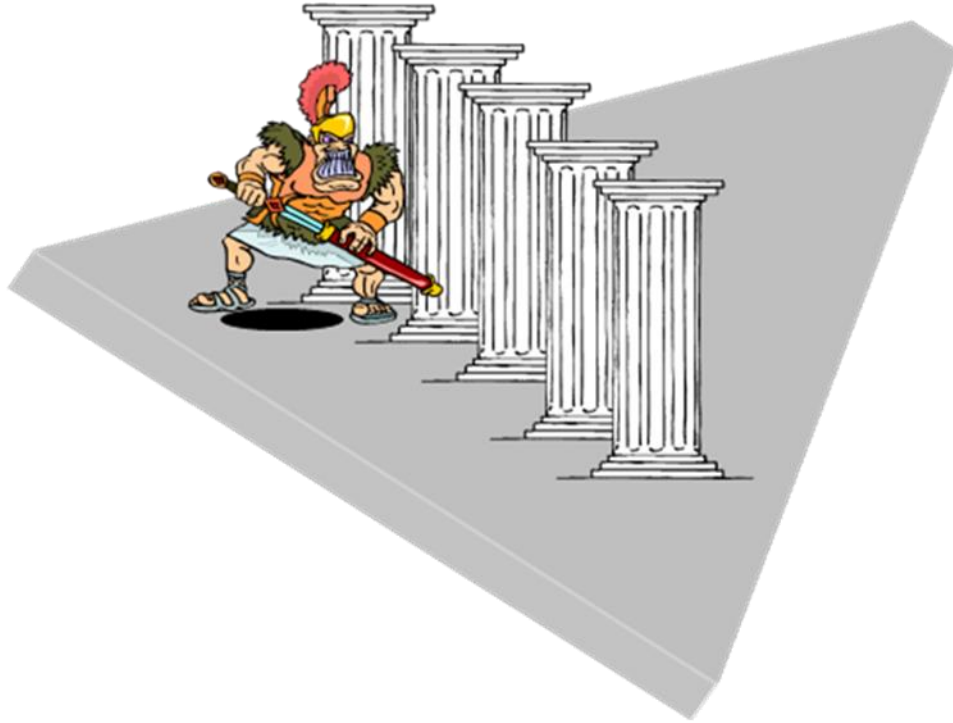
*Luke 19:27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.*

Isaiah described judgment as the grapes of wrath—a day of justice, a day of darkness and death.

Jesus told a parable about rebels that refused His authority. Notice His remedy: "Bring them hither and slay them before me." King Jesus has ordered the execution of rebels. That order will be carried out now in time or later in eternity. Sweet Jesus is the Hangman that executes His adversaries. Good governments acknowledge their duties under King Jesus to be a terror to evildoers.

In conclusion, evil exist in this world and war is a means of restraining evildoers. Until His kingdom arrives in its fullness, the church militant must learn the art of war, develop a warrior mindset, and engage rebels against God's law-order. This involves winning souls, fighting for the faith once delivered to the saints, resisting civil rulers who do mischief through law, and it may even mean having to defend family and friends from a physical assault. Fear of war and unwilling to fight is disobedience and must be repented of. Our God is a Warlord. It is His will that Christian learn the art of war become His Battle Ax.

## **HISTORICAL CREEDS**



## **94. APOSTLES CREED CIRCA 200-750 A.D.**

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. AMEN.

## **95. THE NICENE CREED 325 A.D.**

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

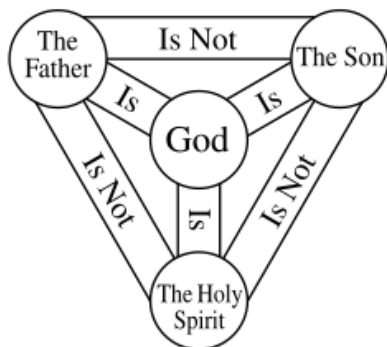
And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## **96. THE ATHANASIAN CREED (4<sup>th</sup> CENTURY)**

The First known Creed to Discuss the Trinity.

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled; without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons; nor dividing the Essence. For there is one Person of the Father; another of the Son; and another

of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is; such is the Son; and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreated; the Son uncreated; and the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father unlimited; the Son



unlimited; and the Holy Ghost unlimited. The Father eternal; the Son eternal; and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three eternals; but one eternal. As also there are not three uncreated; nor three infinities, but one uncreated; and one infinite. So likewise the Father is Almighty; the Son Almighty; and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not three Almighties; but one Almighty. So the Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods; but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord; the Son Lord; and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords; but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity; to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord; So are we forbidden by the catholic religion; to say, There are three

Gods, or three Lords. The Father is made of none; neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created; but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten; but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is before, or after another; none is greater, or less than another. But the whole three Persons are coeternal, and coequal. So that in all things, as aforesaid; the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, let him thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation; that he also believe faithfully the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess; that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the Essence of the Father; begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the Essence of his Mother, born in the world. Perfect God; and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood. Who although he is God and Man; yet he is not two, but one Christ. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh; but by assumption of the Manhood by God. One altogether; not by confusion of Essence; but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man; so God and Man is one Christ; Who suffered for our salvation; descended into hell; rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the God the Father Almighty, from whence he will come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies; And shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire. This is the catholic faith; which except a man believe truly and firmly, he cannot be saved.

### **THE CANONS OF DORDT**

#### *Formally Titled*

#### *The Decision of the Synod of Dordt on the Five Main Points of Doctrine in Dispute in the Netherlands*

The five points of Calvinism were formulated as a result of address the Arminian Remonstrance at this Synod.

## **THE FIRST MAIN POINT OF DOCTRINE**

### **Divine Election and Reprobation**

#### **The Judgment Concerning Divine Predestination**

**Which the Synod Declares to Be in Agreement with the Word of God  
and Accepted Till Now in the Reformed Churches,  
Set Forth in Several Articles**

#### Article 1: God's Right to Condemn All People

Since all people have sinned in Adam and have come under the sentence of the curse and eternal death, God would have done no one an injustice if it had been his will to leave the entire human race in sin and under the curse, and to condemn them on account of their sin. As the apostle says: The whole world is liable to the condemnation of God (Romans 3:19), All have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).\*

-- \*All quotations from Scripture are translations of the original Latin manuscript. --

#### Article 2: The Manifestation of God's Love

But this is how God showed his love: he sent his only begotten Son into the world, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

#### Article 3: The Preaching of the Gospel

In order that people may be brought to faith, God mercifully sends proclaimers of this very joyful message to the people he wishes and at the time he wishes. By this ministry people are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified. For how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without someone preaching? And how shall they preach unless they have been sent? (Romans 10:14-15).

#### Article 4: A Twofold Response to the Gospel

God's anger remains on those who do not believe this gospel. But those who do accept it and embrace Jesus the Savior with a true and living faith are delivered through him from God's anger and from destruction, and receive the gift of eternal life.

#### Article 5: The Sources of Unbelief and of Faith

The cause or blame for this unbelief, as well as for all other sins, is not at all in God, but in man. Faith in Jesus Christ, however, and salvation through him is a free gift of God. As Scripture says, It is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8). Likewise: It has been freely given to you to believe in Christ (Phil. 1:29).

## Article 6: God's Eternal Decision

The fact that some receive from God the gift of faith within time, and that others do not, stems from his eternal decision. For all his works are known to God from eternity (Acts 15:18; Eph. 1:11). In accordance with this decision he graciously softens the hearts, however hard, of his chosen ones and inclines them to believe, but by his just judgment he leaves in their wickedness and hardness of heart those who have not been chosen. And in this especially is disclosed to us his act -- unfathomable, and as merciful as it is just -- of distinguishing between people equally lost. This is the well-known decision of election and reprobation revealed in God's Word. This decision the wicked, impure, and unstable distort to their own ruin, but it provides holy and godly souls with comfort beyond words.

## Article 7: Election

Election (or choosing) is God's unchangeable purpose by which he did the following:

Before the foundation of the world, by sheer grace, according to the free good pleasure of his will, he chose in Christ to salvation a definite number of particular people out of the entire human race, which had fallen by its own fault from its original innocence into sin and ruin. Those chosen were neither better nor more deserving than the others, but lay with them in the common misery. He did this in Christ, whom he also appointed from eternity to be the mediator, the head of all those chosen, and the foundation of their salvation. And so he decided to give the chosen ones to Christ to be saved, and to call and draw them effectively into Christ's fellowship through his Word and Spirit. In other words, he decided to grant them true faith in Christ, to justify them, to sanctify them, and finally, after powerfully preserving them in the fellowship of his Son, to glorify them.

God did all this in order to demonstrate his mercy, to the praise of the riches of his glorious grace.

As Scripture says, God chose us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, so that we should be holy and blameless before him with love; he predestined us whom he adopted as his children through Jesus Christ, in himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, by which he freely made us pleasing to himself in his beloved (Eph. 1:4-6). And elsewhere, Those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified, he also glorified (Romans 8:30).

## Article 8: A Single Decision of Election

This election is not of many kinds; it is one and the same election for all who were to be saved in the Old and the New Testament. For Scripture declares that there is a single good pleasure, purpose, and plan of God's will, by which he chose us from eternity both to grace and to glory, both to salvation and to the way of salvation, which he prepared in advance for us to walk in.

#### Article 9: Election Not Based on Foreseen Faith

This same election took place, not on the basis of foreseen faith, of the obedience of faith, of holiness, or of any other good quality and disposition, as though it were based on a prerequisite cause or condition in the person to be chosen, but rather for the purpose of faith, of the obedience of faith, of holiness, and so on. Accordingly, election is the source of each of the benefits of salvation. Faith, holiness, and the other saving gifts, and at last eternal life itself, flow forth from election as its fruits and effects. As the apostle says, He chose us (not because we were, but) so that we should be holy and blameless before him in love (Eph. 1:4).

#### Article 10: Election Based on God's Good Pleasure

But the cause of this undeserved election is exclusively the good pleasure of God. This does not involve his choosing certain human qualities or actions from among all those possible as a condition of salvation, but rather involves his adopting certain particular persons from among the common mass of sinners as his own possession. As Scripture says, When the children were not yet born, and had done nothing either good or bad..., she (Rebecca) was told, "The older will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (Romans 9:11-13). Also, All who were appointed for eternal life believed (Acts 13:48).

#### Article 11: Election Unchangeable

Just as God himself is most wise, unchangeable, all-knowing, and almighty, so the election made by him can neither be suspended nor altered, revoked, or annulled; neither can his chosen ones be cast off, nor their number reduced.

#### Article 12: The Assurance of Election

Assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election to salvation is given to the chosen in due time, though by various stages and in differing measure. Such assurance comes not by inquisitive searching into the hidden and deep things of God, but by noticing within themselves, with spiritual joy and holy delight, the unmistakable fruits of election pointed out in God's Word -- such as a true faith in Christ, a childlike fear of God, a godly sorrow for their sins, a hunger and thirst for righteousness, and so on.

#### Article 13: The Fruit of This Assurance

In their awareness and assurance of this election God's children daily find greater cause to humble themselves before God, to adore the fathomless depth of his mercies, to cleanse themselves, and to give fervent love in return to him who first so greatly loved them. This is far from saying that this teaching concerning election, and reflection upon it, make God's children lax in observing his commandments or carnally self-assured. By God's just judgment this does



usually happen to those who casually take for granted the grace of election or engage in idle and brazen talk about it but are unwilling to walk in the ways of the chosen.

#### Article 14: Teaching Election Properly

Just as, by God's wise plan, this teaching concerning divine election has been proclaimed through the prophets, Christ himself, and the apostles, in Old and New Testament times, and has subsequently been committed to writing in the Holy Scriptures, so also today in God's church, for which it was specifically intended, this teaching must be set forth -- with a spirit of discretion, in a godly and holy manner, at the appropriate time and place, without inquisitive searching into the ways of the Most High. This must be done for the glory of God's most holy name, and for the lively comfort of his people.

#### Article 15: Reprobation

Moreover, Holy Scripture most especially highlights this eternal and undeserved grace of our election and brings it out more clearly for us, in that it further bears witness that not all people have been chosen but that some have not been chosen or have been passed by in God's eternal election -- those, that is, concerning whom God, on the basis of his entirely free, most just, irreproachable, and unchangeable good pleasure, made the following decision: to leave them in the common misery into which, by their own fault, they have plunged themselves; not to grant them saving faith and the grace of conversion; but finally to condemn and eternally punish them (having been left in their own ways and under his just judgment), not only for their unbelief but also for all their other sins, in order to display his justice. And this is the decision of reprobation, which does not at all make God the author of sin (a blasphemous thought!) but rather its fearful, irreproachable, just judge and avenger.

#### Article 16: Responses to the Teaching of Reprobation

Those who do not yet actively experience within themselves a living faith in Christ or an assured confidence of heart, peace of conscience, a zeal for childlike obedience, and a glorying in God through Christ, but who nevertheless use the means by which God has promised to work these things in us -- such people ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to count themselves among the reprobate; rather they ought to continue diligently in the use of the means, to desire fervently a time of more abundant grace, and to wait for it in reverence and humility. On the other hand, those who seriously desire to turn to God, to be pleasing to him alone, and to be delivered from the body of death, but are not yet able to make such progress along the way of godliness and faith as they would like -- such people ought much less to stand in fear of the teaching concerning reprobation, since our merciful God has promised that he will not snuff out a smoldering wick and that he will not break a bruised reed. However, those who have forgotten God and their Savior Jesus Christ and have abandoned themselves wholly to the cares of the world and the pleasures of the flesh -- such people have every reason to stand in fear of this teaching, as long as they do not seriously turn to God.

### Article 17: The Salvation of the Infants of Believers

Since we must make judgments about God's will from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature but by virtue of the gracious covenant in which they together with their parents are included, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in infancy.

### Article 18: The Proper Attitude Toward Election and Reprobation

To those who complain about this grace of an undeserved election and about the severity of a just reprobation, we reply with the words of the apostle, Who are you, O man, to talk back to God? (Romans 9:20), and with the words of our Savior, Have I no right to do what I want with my own? (Matt. 20:15). We, however, with reverent adoration of these secret things, cry out with the apostle: Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways beyond tracing out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has first given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen (Romans 11:33-36).

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## REJECTION OF THE ERRORS

*by Which the Dutch Churches Have for Some Time Been Disturbed*

Having set forth the orthodox teaching concerning election and reprobation, the Synod rejects the errors of those . . .

**Who teach that the will of God to save those who would believe and persevere in faith and in the obedience of faith is the whole and entire decision of election to salvation, and that nothing else concerning this decision has been revealed in God's Word.**

For they deceive the simple and plainly contradict Holy Scripture in its testimony that God does not only wish to save those who would believe, but that he has also from eternity chosen certain particular people to whom, rather than to others, he would within time grant faith in Christ and perseverance. As Scripture says, I have revealed your name to those whom you gave me (John 17:6). Likewise, All who were appointed for eternal life believed (Acts 13:48), and He chose us before the foundation of the world so that we should be holy... (Eph. 1:4).

## II

**Who teach that God's election to eternal life is of many kinds: one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and the latter in turn either incomplete, revocable, nonperemptory (or conditional), or else complete, irrevocable, and peremptory (or**

**absolute). Likewise, who teach that there is one election to faith and another to salvation, so that there can be an election to justifying faith apart from a peremptory election to salvation.**

For this is an invention of the human brain, devised apart from the Scriptures, which distorts the teaching concerning election and breaks up this golden chain of salvation: Those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified, he also glorified (Romans 8:30).

## II

**Who teach that God's good pleasure and purpose, which Scripture mentions in its teaching of election, does not involve God's choosing certain particular people rather than others, but involves God's choosing, out of all possible conditions (including the works of the law) or out of the whole order of things, the intrinsically unworthy act of faith, as well as the imperfect obedience of faith, to be a condition of salvation; and it involves his graciously wishing to count this as perfect obedience and to look upon it as worthy of the reward of eternal life.**

For by this pernicious error the good pleasure of God and the merit of Christ are robbed of their effectiveness and people are drawn away, by unprofitable inquiries, from the truth of undeserved justification and from the simplicity of the Scriptures. It also gives the lie to these words of the apostle: God called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of works, but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time (2 Tim. 1:9).

## IV

**Who teach that in election to faith a prerequisite condition is that man should rightly use the light of nature, be upright, unassuming, humble, and disposed to eternal life, as though election depended to some extent on these factors.**

For this smacks of Pelagius, and it clearly calls into question the words of the apostle: We lived at one time in the passions of our flesh, following the will of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in transgressions, made us alive with Christ, by whose grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with him and seated us with him in heaven in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages we might show the surpassing riches of his grace, according to his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith (and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God) not by works, so that no one can boast (Eph. 2:3-9).

## V

**Who teach that the incomplete and nonperemptory election of particular persons to salvation occurred on the basis of a foreseen faith, repentance, holiness, and godliness, which has just begun or continued for some time; but that complete and peremptory election occurred on the basis of a foreseen perseverance to the end in faith, repentance, holiness, and godliness. And that this is the gracious and evangelical worthiness, on account of which the one who is chosen is more worthy than the one who is not chosen. And therefore that faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness, and perseverance are not fruits or effects of an unchangeable election to glory, but indispensable conditions and causes, which are prerequisite in those who are to be chosen in the complete election, and which are foreseen as achieved in them.**

This runs counter to the entire Scripture, which throughout impresses upon our ears and hearts these sayings among others: Election is not by works, but by him who calls (Romans 9:11-12); All who were appointed for eternal life believed (Acts 13:48); He chose us in himself so that we should be holy (Eph. 1:4); You did not choose me, but I chose you (John 15:16); If by grace, not by works (Romans 11:6); In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son (1 John 4:10).

## VI

**Who teach that not every election to salvation is unchangeable, but that some of the chosen can perish and do in fact perish eternally, with no decision of God to prevent it.**

By this gross error they make God changeable, destroy the comfort of the godly concerning the steadfastness of their election, and contradict the Holy Scriptures, which teach that the elect cannot be led astray (Matt. 24:24), that Christ does not lose those given to him by the Father (John 6:39), and that those whom God predestined, called, and justified, he also glorifies (Romans 8:30).

## VII

**Who teach that in this life there is no fruit, no awareness, and no assurance of one's unchangeable election to glory, except as conditional upon something changeable and contingent.**

For not only is it absurd to speak of an uncertain assurance, but these things also militate against the experience of the saints, who with the apostle rejoice from an awareness of their election and sing the praises of this gift of God; who, as Christ urged, rejoice with his disciples that their names have been written in heaven (Luke 10:20); and finally who hold up against the flaming arrows of the devil's temptations the awareness of their election, with the question Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? (Romans 8:33).

## VIII

**Who teach that it was not on the basis of his just will alone that God decided to leave anyone in the fall of Adam and in the common state of sin and condemnation or to pass anyone by in the imparting of grace necessary for faith and conversion.**

For these words stand fast: He has mercy on whom he wishes, and he hardens whom he wishes (Romans 9:18). And also: To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given (Matt. 13:11). Likewise: I give glory to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and have revealed them to little children; yes, Father, because that was your pleasure (Matt. 11:25-26).

## IX

**Who teach that the cause for God's sending the gospel to one people rather than to another is not merely and solely God's good pleasure, but rather that one people is better and worthier than the other to whom the gospel is not communicated.**

For Moses contradicts this when he addresses the people of Israel as follows: Behold, to Jehovah your God belong the heavens and the highest heavens, the earth and whatever is in it. But Jehovah was inclined in his affection to love your ancestors alone, and chose out their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as at this day (Deut. 10:14-15). And also Christ: Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! for if those mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes (Matt. 11:21).

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## THE SECOND MAIN POINT OF DOCTRINE

### **CHRIST'S DEATH AND HUMAN REDEMPTION THROUGH ITS**

#### Article 1: The Punishment Which God's Justice Requires

God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. His justice requires (as he has revealed himself in the Word) that the sins we have committed against his infinite majesty be punished with both temporal and eternal punishments, of soul as well as body. We cannot escape these punishments unless satisfaction is given to God's justice.

#### Article 2: The Satisfaction Made by Christ

Since, however, we ourselves cannot give this satisfaction or deliver ourselves from God's anger, God in his boundless mercy has given us as a guarantee his only begotten Son, who was made to be sin and a curse for us, in our place, on the cross, in order that he might give satisfaction for us.

#### Article 3: The Infinite Value of Christ's Death

This death of God's Son is the only and entirely complete sacrifice and satisfaction for sins; it is of infinite value and worth, more than sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world.

#### Article 4: Reasons for This Infinite Value

This death is of such great value and worth for the reason that the person who suffered it is -- as was necessary to be our Savior -- not only a true and perfectly holy man, but also the only begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Another reason is that this death was accompanied by the experience of God's anger and curse, which we by our sins had fully deserved.

#### Article 5: The Mandate to Proclaim the Gospel to All

Moreover, it is the promise of the gospel that whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish but have eternal life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be announced and declared without differentiation or discrimination to all nations and people, to whom God in his good pleasure sends the gospel.

#### Article 6: Unbelief Man's Responsibility

However, that many who have been called through the gospel do not repent or believe in Christ but perish in unbelief is not because the sacrifice of Christ offered on the cross is deficient or insufficient, but because they themselves are at fault.

#### Article 7: Faith God's Gift

But all who genuinely believe and are delivered and saved by Christ's death from their sins and from destruction receive this favor solely from God's grace -- which he owes to no one -- given to them in Christ from eternity.

#### Article 8: The Saving Effectiveness of Christ's Death

For it was the entirely free plan and very gracious will and intention of God the Father that the enlivening and saving effectiveness of his Son's costly death should work itself out in all his chosen ones, in order that he might grant justifying faith to them only and thereby lead them without fail to salvation. In other words, it was God's will that Christ through the blood of the cross (by which he confirmed the new covenant) should effectively redeem from every people, tribe, nation, and language all those and only those who were chosen from eternity to salvation and given to him by the Father; that he should grant them faith (which, like the Holy Spirit's other saving gifts, he acquired for them by his death); that he should cleanse them by his blood from all their sins, both original and actual, whether committed before or after their coming to faith; that he should faithfully preserve them to the very end; and that he should finally present them to himself, a glorious people, without spot or wrinkle.

## Article 9: The Fulfillment of God's Plan

This plan, arising out of God's eternal love for his chosen ones, from the beginning of the world to the present time has been powerfully carried out and will also be carried out in the future, the gates of hell seeking vainly to prevail against it. As a result the chosen are gathered into one, all in their own time, and there is always a church of believers founded on Christ's blood, a church which steadfastly loves, persistently worships, and -- here and in all eternity -- praises him as her Savior who laid down his life for her on the cross, as a bridegroom for his bride.

### **REJECTION OF ERRORS**

*Having set forth the orthodox teaching, the Synod rejects the errors of those*

#### **I**

**Who teach that God the Father appointed his Son to death on the cross without a fixed and definite plan to save anyone by name, so that the necessity, usefulness, and worth of what Christ's death obtained could have stood intact and altogether perfect, complete and whole, even if the redemption that was obtained had never in actual fact been applied to any individual.**

For this assertion is an insult to the wisdom of God the Father and to the merit of Jesus Christ, and it is contrary to Scripture. For the Savior speaks as follows: I lay down my life for the sheep, and I know them (John 10:15, 27). And Isaiah the prophet says concerning the Savior: When he shall make himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days, and the will of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand (Isa. 53:10). Finally, this undermines the article of the creed in which we confess what we believe concerning the Church.

#### **II**

**Who teach that the purpose of Christ's death was not to establish in actual fact a new covenant of grace by his blood, but only to acquire for the Father the mere right to enter once more into a covenant with men, whether of grace or of works.**

For this conflicts with Scripture, which teaches that Christ has become the guarantee and mediator of a better -- that is, a new-covenant (Heb. 7:22; 9:15), and that a will is in force only when someone has died (Heb. 9:17).

#### **III**

**Who teach that Christ, by the satisfaction which he gave, did not certainly merit for anyone salvation itself and the faith by which this satisfaction of Christ is effectively applied to salvation, but only acquired for the Father the authority or plenary will to relate in a new way with men and to impose such new conditions as he chose, and that the satisfying of**

**these conditions depends on the free choice of man; consequently, that it was possible that either all or none would fulfill them.**

For they have too low an opinion of the death of Christ, do not at all acknowledge the foremost fruit or benefit which it brings forth, and summon back from hell the Pelagian error.

#### IV

**Who teach that what is involved in the new covenant of grace which God the Father made with men through the intervening of Christ's death is not that we are justified before God and saved through faith, insofar as it accepts Christ's merit, but rather that God, having withdrawn his demand for perfect obedience to the law, counts faith itself, and the imperfect obedience of faith, as perfect obedience to the law, and graciously looks upon this as worthy of the reward of eternal life.**

For they contradict Scripture: They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ, whom God presented as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood (Romans 3:24-25). And along with the ungodly Socinus, they introduce a new and foreign justification of man before God, against the consensus of the whole church.

#### V

**Who teach that all people have been received into the state of reconciliation and into the grace of the covenant, so that no one on account of original sin is liable to condemnation, or is to be condemned, but that all are free from the guilt of this sin.**

For this opinion conflicts with Scripture which asserts that we are by nature children of wrath.

#### VI

**Who make use of the distinction between obtaining and applying in order to instill in the unwary and inexperienced the opinion that God, as far as he is concerned, wished to bestow equally upon all people the benefits which are gained by Christ's death; but that the distinction by which some rather than others come to share in the forgiveness of sins and eternal life depends on their own free choice (which applies itself to the grace offered indiscriminately) but does not depend on the unique gift of mercy which effectively works in them, so that they, rather than others, apply that grace to themselves.**

For, while pretending to set forth this distinction in an acceptable sense, they attempt to give the people the deadly poison of Pelagianism.

#### VII



**Who teach that Christ neither could die, nor had to die, nor did die for those whom God so dearly loved and chose to eternal life, since such people do not need the death of Christ.**

For they contradict the apostle, who says: Christ loved me and gave himself up for me (Gal. 2:20), and likewise: Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, that is, for them (Romans 8:33-34). They also contradict the Savior, who asserts: I lay down my life for the sheep (John 10:15), and My command is this: Love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends (John 15:12-13).

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### **THE THIRD AND FOURTH MAIN POINTS OF DOCTRINE**

#### **HUMAN CORRUPTION, CONVERSION TO GOD, AND THE WAY IT OCCURS**

##### Article 1: The Effect of the Fall on Human Nature

Man was originally created in the image of God and was furnished in his mind with a true and salutary knowledge of his Creator and things spiritual, in his will and heart with righteousness, and in all his emotions with purity; indeed, the whole man was holy. However, rebelling against God at the devil's instigation and by his own free will, he deprived himself of these outstanding gifts. Rather, in their place he brought upon himself blindness, terrible darkness, futility, and distortion of judgment in his mind; perversity, defiance, and hardness in his heart and will; and finally impurity in all his emotions.

##### Article 2: The Spread of Corruption

Man brought forth children of the same nature as himself after the fall. That is to say, being corrupt he brought forth corrupt children. The corruption spread, by God's just judgment, from Adam to all his descendants -- except for Christ alone -- not by way of imitation (as in former times the Pelagians would have it) but by way of the propagation of his perverted nature.

##### Article 3: Total Inability

Therefore, all people are conceived in sin and are born children of wrath, unfit for any saving good, inclined to evil, dead in their sins, and slaves to sin; without the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit they are neither willing nor able to return to God, to reform their distorted nature, or even to dispose themselves to such reform.

##### Article 4: The Inadequacy of the Light of Nature

There is, to be sure, a certain light of nature remaining in man after the fall, by virtue of which he retains some notions about God, natural things, and the difference between what is moral and immoral, and demonstrates a certain eagerness for virtue and for good outward behavior. But this light of nature is far from enabling man to come to a saving knowledge of God and conversion to him -- so far, in fact, that man does not use it rightly even in matters of nature and society. Instead, in various ways he completely distorts this light, whatever its precise character, and suppresses it in unrighteousness. In doing so he renders himself without excuse before God.

#### Article 5: The Inadequacy of the Law

In this respect, what is true of the light of nature is true also of the Ten Commandments given by God through Moses specifically to the Jews. For man cannot obtain saving grace through the Decalogue, because, although it does expose the magnitude of his sin and increasingly convict him of his guilt, yet it does not offer a remedy or enable him to escape from his misery, and, indeed, weakened as it is by the flesh, leaves the offender under the curse.

#### Article 6: The Saving Power of the Gospel

What, therefore, neither the light of nature nor the law can do, God accomplishes by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the Word or the ministry of reconciliation. This is the gospel about the Messiah, through which it has pleased God to save believers, in both the Old and the New Testament.

#### Article 7: God's Freedom in Revealing the Gospel

In the Old Testament, God revealed this secret of his will to a small number; in the New Testament (now without any distinction between peoples) he discloses it to a large number. The reason for this difference must not be ascribed to the greater worth of one nation over another, or to a better use of the light of nature, but to the free good pleasure and undeserved love of God. Therefore, those who receive so much grace, beyond and in spite of all they deserve, ought to acknowledge it with humble and thankful hearts; on the other hand, with the apostle they ought to adore (but certainly not inquisitively search into) the severity and justice of God's judgments on the others, who do not receive this grace.

#### Article 8: The Serious Call of the Gospel

Nevertheless, all who are called through the gospel are called seriously. For seriously and most genuinely God makes known in his Word what is pleasing to him: that those who are called should come to him. Seriously he also promises rest for their souls and eternal life to all who come to him and believe.

#### Article 9: Human Responsibility for Rejecting the Gospel

The fact that many who are called through the ministry of the gospel do not come and are not brought to conversion must not be blamed on the gospel, nor on Christ, who is offered through the gospel, nor on God, who calls them through the gospel and even bestows various gifts on them, but on the people themselves who are called. Some in self-assurance do not even entertain the Word of life; others do entertain it but do not take it to heart, and for that reason, after the fleeting joy of a temporary faith, they relapse; others choke the seed of the Word with the thorns of life's cares and with the pleasures of the world and bring forth no fruits. This our Savior teaches in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13).

#### Article 10: Conversion as the Work of God

The fact that others who are called through the ministry of the gospel do come and are brought to conversion must not be credited to man, as though one distinguishes himself by free choice from others who are furnished with equal or sufficient grace for faith and conversion (as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains). No, it must be credited to God: just as from eternity he chose his own in Christ, so within time he effectively calls them, grants them faith and repentance, and, having rescued them from the dominion of darkness, brings them into the kingdom of his Son, in order that they may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called them out of darkness into this marvelous light, and may boast not in themselves, but in the Lord, as apostolic words frequently testify in Scripture.

#### Article 11: The Holy Spirit's Work in Conversion

Moreover, when God carries out this good pleasure in his chosen ones, or works true conversion in them, he not only sees to it that the gospel is proclaimed to them outwardly, and enlightens their minds powerfully by the Holy Spirit so that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God, but, by the effective operation of the same regenerating Spirit, he also penetrates into the inmost being of man, opens the closed heart, softens the hard heart, and circumcises the heart that is uncircumcised. He infuses new qualities into the will, making the dead will alive, the evil one good, the unwilling one willing, and the stubborn one compliant; he activates and strengthens the will so that, like a good tree, it may be enabled to produce the fruits of good deeds.

#### Article 12: Regeneration a Supernatural Work

And this is the regeneration, the new creation, the raising from the dead, and the making alive so clearly proclaimed in the Scriptures, which God works in us without our help. But this certainly does not happen only by outward teaching, by moral persuasion, or by such a way of working that, after God has done his work, it remains in man's power whether or not to be reborn or converted. Rather, it is an entirely supernatural work, one that is at the same time most powerful and most pleasing, a marvelous, hidden, and inexpressible work, which is not lesser than or inferior in power to that of creation or of raising the dead, as Scripture (inspired by the author of this work) teaches. As a result, all those in whose hearts God works in this marvelous way are

certainly, unfailingly, and effectively reborn and do actually believe. And then the will, now renewed, is not only activated and motivated by God but in being activated by God is also itself active. For this reason, man himself, by that grace which he has received, is also rightly said to believe and to repent.

#### Article 13: The Incomprehensible Way of Regeneration

In this life believers cannot fully understand the way this work occurs; meanwhile, they rest content with knowing and experiencing that by this grace of God they do believe with the heart and love their Savior.

#### Article 14: The Way God Gives Faith

In this way, therefore, faith is a gift of God, not in the sense that it is offered by God for man to choose, but that it is in actual fact bestowed on man, breathed and infused into him. Nor is it a gift in the sense that God bestows only the potential to believe, but then awaits assent -- the act of believing -- from man's choice; rather, it is a gift in the sense that he who works both willing and acting and, indeed, works all things in all people produces in man both the will to believe and the belief itself.

#### Article 15: Responses to God's Grace

God does not owe this grace to anyone. For what could God owe to one who has nothing to give that can be paid back? Indeed, what could God owe to one who has nothing of his own to give but sin and falsehood? Therefore the person who receives this grace owes and gives eternal thanks to God alone; the person who does not receive it either does not care at all about these spiritual things and is satisfied with himself in his condition, or else in self-assurance foolishly boasts about having something which he lacks. Furthermore, following the example of the apostles, we are to think and to speak in the most favorable way about those who outwardly profess their faith and better their lives, for the inner chambers of the heart are unknown to us. But for others who have not yet been called, we are to pray to the God who calls things that do not exist as though they did. In no way, however, are we to pride ourselves as better than they, as though we had distinguished ourselves from them.

#### Article 16: Regeneration's Effect

However, just as by the fall man did not cease to be man, endowed with intellect and will, and just as sin, which has spread through the whole human race, did not abolish the nature of the human race but distorted and spiritually killed it, so also this divine grace of regeneration does not act in people as if they were blocks and stones; nor does it abolish the will and its properties or coerce a reluctant will by force, but spiritually revives, heals, reforms, and -- in a manner at once pleasing and powerful -- bends it back. As a result, a ready and sincere obedience of the Spirit now begins to prevail where before the rebellion and resistance of the flesh were

completely dominant. It is in this that the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consists. Thus, if the marvelous Maker of every good thing were not dealing with us, man would have no hope of getting up from his fall by his free choice, by which he plunged himself into ruin when still standing upright.

#### Article 17: God's Use of Means in Regeneration

Just as the almighty work of God by which he brings forth and sustains our natural life does not rule out but requires the use of means, by which God, according to his infinite wisdom and goodness, has wished to exercise his power, so also the aforementioned supernatural work of God by which he regenerates us in no way rules out or cancels the use of the gospel, which God in his great wisdom has appointed to be the seed of regeneration and the food of the soul. For this reason, the apostles and the teachers who followed them taught the people in a godly manner about this grace of God, to give him the glory and to humble all pride, and yet did not neglect meanwhile to keep the people, by means of the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the administration of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline. So even today it is out of the question that the teachers or those taught in the church should presume to test God by separating what he in his good pleasure has wished to be closely joined together. For grace is bestowed through admonitions, and the more readily we perform our duty, the more lustrous the benefit of God working in us usually is and the better his work advances. To him alone, both for the means and for their saving fruit and effectiveness, all glory is owed forever. Amen.

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#### REJECTION OF ERRORS

#### **HAVING SET FORTH THE ORTHODOX TEACHING, THE SYNDOD REJECT THE ERRORS OF THOSE**

##### I

**Who teach that, properly speaking, it cannot be said that original sin in itself is enough to condemn the whole human race or to warrant temporal and eternal punishments.**

For they contradict the apostle when he says: Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death passed on to all men because all sinned (Romans 5:12); also: The guilt followed one sin and brought condemnation (Romans 5:16); likewise: The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

##### II

**Who teach that the spiritual gifts or the good dispositions and virtues such as goodness, holiness, and righteousness could not have resided in man's will when he was first created, and therefore could not have been separated from the will at the fall.**

For this conflicts with the apostle's description of the image of God in Ephesians 4:24, where he portrays the image in terms of righteousness and holiness, which definitely reside in the will.

### III

**Who teach that in spiritual death the spiritual gifts have not been separated from man's will, since the will in itself has never been corrupted but only hindered by the darkness of the mind and the unruliness of the emotions, and since the will is able to exercise its innate free capacity once these hindrances are removed, which is to say, it is able of itself to will or choose whatever good is set before it -- or else not to will or choose it.**

This is a novel idea and an error. It has the effect of elevating the power of free choice, contrary to the words of Jeremiah the prophet: The heart itself is deceitful above all things and wicked (Jer. 17:9); and of the words of the apostle: All of us also lived among them (the sons of disobedience) at one time in the passions of our flesh, following the will of our flesh and thoughts (Eph. 2:3).

### IV

**Who teach that unregenerate man is not strictly or totally dead in his sins or deprived of all capacity for spiritual good but is able to hunger and thirst for righteousness or life and to offer the sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit which is pleasing to God.**

For these views are opposed to the plain testimonies of Scripture: You were dead in your transgressions and sins (Eph. 2:1, 5); The imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil all the time (Gen. 6:5; 8:21). Besides, to hunger and thirst for deliverance from misery and for life, and to offer God the sacrifice of a broken spirit is characteristic only of the regenerate and of those called blessed (Ps. 51:17; Matt. 5:6).

### V

**Who teach that corrupt and natural man can make such good use of common grace (by which they mean the light of nature) or of the gifts remaining after the fall that he is able thereby gradually to obtain a greater grace -- evangelical or saving grace -- as well as salvation itself; and that in this way God, for his part, shows himself ready to reveal Christ to all people, since he provides to all, to a sufficient extent and in an effective manner, the means necessary for the revealing of Christ, for faith, and for repentance.**

For Scripture, not to mention the experience of all ages, testifies that this is false: He makes known his words to Jacob, his statutes and his laws to Israel; he has done this for no other nation, and they do not know his laws (Ps. 147:19-20); In the past God let all nations go their own way (Acts 14:16); They (Paul and his companions) were kept by the Holy Spirit from speaking God's

word in Asia; and When they had come to Mysia, they tried to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit would not allow them to (Acts 16:6-7).

## VI

**Who teach that in the true conversion of man new qualities, dispositions, or gifts cannot be infused or poured into his will by God, and indeed that the faith (or believing) by which we first come to conversion and from which we receive the name "believers" is not a quality or gift infused by God, but only an act of man, and that it cannot be called a gift except in respect to the power of attaining faith.**

For these views contradict the Holy Scriptures, which testify that God does infuse or pour into our hearts the new qualities of faith, obedience, and the experiencing of his love: I will put my law in their minds, and write it on their hearts (Jer. 31:33); I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring (Isa. 44:3); The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us (Romans 5:5). They also conflict with the continuous practice of the Church, which prays with the prophet: Convert me, Lord, and I shall be converted (Jer. 31:18).

## VII

**Who teach that the grace by which we are converted to God is nothing but a gentle persuasion, or(as others explain it) that the way of God's acting in man's conversion that is most noble and suited to human nature is that which happens by persuasion, and that nothing prevents this grace of moral suasion even by itself from making natural men spiritual; indeed, that God does not produce the assent of the will except in this manner of moral suasion, and that the effectiveness of God's work by which it surpasses the work of Satan consists in the fact that God promises eternal benefits while Satan promises temporal ones.**

For this teaching is entirely Pelagian and contrary to the whole of Scripture, which recognizes besides this persuasion also another, far more effective and divine way in which the Holy Spirit acts in man's conversion. As Ezekiel 36:26 puts it: I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; and I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh....

## VIII

**Who teach that God in regenerating man does not bring to bear that power of his omnipotence whereby he may powerfully and unfailingly bend man's will to faith and conversion, but that even when God has accomplished all the works of grace which he uses for man's conversion, man nevertheless can, and in actual fact often does, so resist God and the Spirit in their intent and will to regenerate him, that man completely thwarts his own rebirth; and, indeed, that it remains in his own power whether or not to be reborn.**

For this does away with all effective functioning of God's grace in our conversion and subjects the activity of Almighty God to the will of man; it is contrary to the apostles, who teach that we believe by virtue of the effective working of God's mighty strength (Eph. 1:19), and that God fulfills the undeserved good will of his kindness and the work of faith in us with power (2 Thess. 1:11), and likewise that his divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

## IX

**Who teach that grace and free choice are concurrent partial causes which cooperate to initiate conversion, and that grace does not precede -- in the order of causality -- the effective influence of the will; that is to say, that God does not effectively help man's will to come to conversion before man's will itself motivates and determines itself.**

For the early church already condemned this doctrine long ago in the Pelagians, on the basis of the words of the apostle: It does not depend on man's willing or running but on God's mercy (Romans 9:16); also: Who makes you different from anyone else? and What do you have that you did not receive? (1 Cor. 4:7); likewise: It is God who works in you to will and act according to his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

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### THE FIFTH POINT OF DOCTRINE

#### THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

##### Article 1: The Regenerate Not Entirely Free from Sin

Those people whom God according to his purpose calls into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, he also sets free from the reign and slavery of sin, though in this life not entirely from the flesh and from the body of sin.

##### Article 2: The Believer's Reaction to Sins of Weakness

Hence daily sins of weakness arise, and blemishes cling to even the best works of God's people, giving them continual cause to humble themselves before God, to flee for refuge to Christ crucified, to put the flesh to death more and more by the Spirit of supplication and by holy exercises of godliness, and to strain toward the goal of perfection, until they are freed from this body of death and reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.

##### Article 3: God's Preservation of the Converted

Because of these remnants of sin dwelling in them and also because of the temptations of the world and Satan, those who have been converted could not remain standing in this grace if left to



their own resources. But God is faithful, mercifully strengthening them in the grace once conferred on them and powerfully preserving them in it to the end.

#### Article 4: The Danger of True Believers' Falling into Serious Sins

Although that power of God strengthening and preserving true believers in grace is more than a match for the flesh, yet those converted are not always so activated and motivated by God that in certain specific actions they cannot by their own fault depart from the leading of grace, be led astray by the desires of the flesh, and give in to them. For this reason they must constantly watch and pray that they may not be led into temptations. When they fail to do this, not only can they be carried away by the flesh, the world, and Satan into sins, even serious and outrageous ones, but also by God's just permission they sometimes are so carried away -- witness the sad cases, described in Scripture, of David, Peter, and other saints falling into sins.

#### Article 5: The Effects of Such Serious Sins

By such monstrous sins, however, they greatly offend God, deserve the sentence of death, grieve the Holy Spirit, suspend the exercise of faith, severely wound the conscience, and sometimes lose the awareness of grace for a time -- until, after they have returned to the way by genuine repentance, God's fatherly face again shines upon them.

#### Article 6: God's Saving Intervention

For God, who is rich in mercy, according to his unchangeable purpose of election does not take his Holy Spirit from his own completely, even when they fall grievously. Neither does he let them fall down so far that they forfeit the grace of adoption and the state of justification, or commit the sin which leads to death (the sin against the Holy Spirit), and plunge themselves, entirely forsaken by him, into eternal ruin.

#### Article 7: Renewal to Repentance

For, in the first place, God preserves in those saints when they fall his imperishable seed from which they have been born again, lest it perish or be dislodged. Secondly, by his Word and Spirit he certainly and effectively renews them to repentance so that they have a heartfelt and godly sorrow for the sins they have committed; seek and obtain, through faith and with a contrite heart, forgiveness in the blood of the Mediator; experience again the grace of a reconciled God; through faith adore his mercies; and from then on more eagerly work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

#### Article 8: The Certainty of This Preservation

So it is not by their own merits or strength but by God's undeserved mercy that they neither forfeit faith and grace totally nor remain in their downfalls to the end and are lost. With respect

to themselves this not only easily could happen, but also undoubtedly would happen; but with respect to God it cannot possibly happen, since his plan cannot be changed, his promise cannot fail, the calling according to his purpose cannot be revoked, the merit of Christ as well as his interceding and preserving cannot be nullified, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit can neither be invalidated nor wiped out.

#### Article 9: The Assurance of This Preservation

Concerning this preservation of those chosen to salvation and concerning the perseverance of true believers in faith, believers themselves can and do become assured in accordance with the measure of their faith, by which they firmly believe that they are and always will remain true and living members of the church, and that they have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

#### Article 10: The Ground of This Assurance

Accordingly, this assurance does not derive from some private revelation beyond or outside the Word, but from faith in the promises of God which he has very plentifully revealed in his Word for our comfort, from the testimony of the Holy Spirit testifying with our spirit that we are God's children and heirs (Romans 8:16-17), and finally from a serious and holy pursuit of a clear conscience and of good works. And if God's chosen ones in this world did not have this well-founded comfort that the victory will be theirs and this reliable guarantee of eternal glory, they would be of all people most miserable.

#### Article 11: Doubts Concerning This Assurance

Meanwhile, Scripture testifies that believers have to contend in this life with various doubts of the flesh and that under severe temptation they do not always experience this full assurance of faith and certainty of perseverance. But God, the Father of all comfort, does not let them be tempted beyond what they can bear, but with the temptation he also provides a way out (1 Cor. 10:13), and by the Holy Spirit revives in them the assurance of their perseverance.

#### Article 12: This Assurance as an Incentive to Godliness

This assurance of perseverance, however, so far from making true believers proud and carnally self-assured, is rather the true root of humility, of childlike respect, of genuine godliness, of endurance in every conflict, of fervent prayers, of steadfastness in crossbearing and in confessing the truth, and of well-founded joy in God. Reflecting on this benefit provides an incentive to a serious and continual practice of thanksgiving and good works, as is evident from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.

#### Article 13: Assurance No Inducement to Carelessness

Neither does the renewed confidence of perseverance produce immorality or lack of concern for godliness in those put back on their feet after a fall, but it produces a much greater concern to observe carefully the ways of the Lord which he prepared in advance. They observe these ways in order that by walking in them they may maintain the assurance of their perseverance, lest, by their abuse of his fatherly goodness, the face of the gracious God (for the godly, looking upon his face is sweeter than life, but its withdrawal is more bitter than death) turn away from them again, with the result that they fall into greater anguish of spirit.

#### Article 14: God's Use of Means in Perseverance

And, just as it has pleased God to begin this work of grace in us by the proclamation of the gospel, so he preserves, continues, and completes his work by the hearing and reading of the gospel, by meditation on it, by its exhortations, threats, and promises, and also by the use of the sacraments.

#### Article 15: Contrasting Reactions to the Teaching of Perseverance

This teaching about the perseverance of true believers and saints, and about their assurance of it - a teaching which God has very richly revealed in his Word for the glory of his name and for the comfort of the godly and which he impresses on the hearts of believers -- is something which the flesh does not understand, Satan hates, the world ridicules, the ignorant and the hypocrites abuse, and the spirits of error attack. The bride of Christ, on the other hand, has always loved this teaching very tenderly and defended it steadfastly as a priceless treasure; and God, against whom no plan can avail and no strength can prevail, will ensure that she will continue to do this. To this God alone, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.

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### **REJECTION OF ERRORS**

#### **CONCERNING THE TEACHING OF THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS**

#### **HAVING SET FORTH THE ORTHODOX TEACHING, THE SYNDOD REJECT THE ERRORS OF THOSE**

I

**Who teach that the perseverance of true believers is not an effect of election or a gift of God produced by Christ's death, but a condition of the new covenant which man, beforewhat they callhis "peremptory" election and justification, must fulfill by his free will.**

For Holy Scripture testifies that perseverance follows from election and is granted to the chosen by virtue of Christ's death, resurrection, and intercession: The chosen obtained it; the others were hardened (Romans 11:7); likewise, He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all

-- how will he not, along with him, grant us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died -- more than that, who was raised -- who also sits at the right hand of God, and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (Romans 8:32-35).

## II

**Who teach that God does provide the believer with sufficient strength to persevere and is ready to preserve this strength in him if he performs his duty, but that even with all those things in place which are necessary to persevere in faith and which God is pleased to use to preserve faith, it still always depends on the choice of man's will whether or not he perseveres.**

For this view is obviously Pelagian; and though it intends to make men free it makes them sacrilegious. It is against the enduring consensus of evangelical teaching which takes from man all cause for boasting and ascribes the praise for this benefit only to God's grace. It is also against the testimony of the apostle: It is God who keeps us strong to the end, so that we will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:8).

## III

**Who teach that those who truly believe and have been born again not only can forfeit justifying faith as well as grace and salvation totally and to the end, but also in actual fact do often forfeit them and are lost forever.**

For this opinion nullifies the very grace of justification and regeneration as well as the continual preservation by Christ, contrary to the plain words of the apostle Paul: If Christ died for us while we were still sinners, we will therefore much more be saved from God's wrath through him, since we have now been justified by his blood (Romans 5:8-9); and contrary to the apostle John: No one who is born of God is intent on sin, because God's seed remains in him, nor can he sin, because he has been born of God (1 John 3:9); also contrary to the words of Jesus Christ: I give eternal life to my sheep, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand (John 10: 28-29).

## IV

**Who teach that those who truly believe and have been born again can commit the sin that leads to death (the sin against the Holy Spirit).**

For the same apostle John, after making mention of those who commit the sin that leads to death and forbidding prayer for them (1 John 5: 16-17), immediately adds: We know that anyone born

of God does not commit sin (that is, that kind of sin), but the one who was born of God keeps himself safe, and the evil one does not touch him (v. 18).

V

**Who teach that apart from a special revelation no one can have the assurance of future perseverance in this life.**

For by this teaching the well-founded consolation of true believers in this life is taken away and the doubting of the Romanists is reintroduced into the church. Holy Scripture, however, in many places derives the assurance not from a special and extraordinary revelation but from the marks peculiar to God's children and from God's completely reliable promises. So especially the apostle Paul: Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:39); and John: They who obey his commands remain in him and he in them. And this is how we know that he remains in us: by the Spirit he gave us (1 John 3:24).

VI

**Who teach that the teaching of the assurance of perseverance and of salvation is by its very nature and character an opiate of the flesh and is harmful to godliness, good morals, prayer, and other holy exercises, but that, on the contrary, to have doubt about this is praiseworthy.**

For these people show that they do not know the effective operation of God's grace and the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and they contradict the apostle John, who asserts the opposite in plain words: Dear friends, now we are children of God, but what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he is made known, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure (1 John 3:2-3). Moreover, they are refuted by the examples of the saints in both the Old and the New Testament, who though assured of their perseverance and salvation yet were constant in prayer and other exercises of godliness.

VII

**Who teach that the faith of those who believe only temporarily does not differ from justifying and saving faith except in duration alone.**

For Christ himself in Matthew 13:20ff. and Luke 8:13ff. clearly defines these further differences between temporary and true believers: he says that the former receive the seed on rocky ground, and the latter receive it in good ground, or a good heart; the former have no root, and the latter are firmly rooted; the former have no fruit, and the latter produce fruit in varying measure, with steadfastness, or perseverance.

## VIII

**Who teach that it is not absurd that a person, after losing his former regeneration, should once again, indeed quite often, be reborn.**

For by this teaching they deny the imperishable nature of God's seed by which we are born again, contrary to the testimony of the apostle Peter: Born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable (1 Pet. 1:23).

## IX

**Who teach that Christ nowhere prayed for an unfailing perseverance of believers in faith.**

For they contradict Christ himself when he says: I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail (Luke 22:32); and John the gospel writer when he testifies in John 17 that it was not only for the apostles, but also for all those who were to believe by their message that Christ prayed: Holy Father, preserve them in your name (v. 11); and My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you preserve them from the evil one (v. 15).

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## CONCLUSION

### **REJECTION OF FALSE ACCUSATIONS**

And so this is the clear, simple, and straightforward explanation of the orthodox teaching on the five articles in dispute in the Netherlands, as well as the rejection of the errors by which the Dutch churches have for some time been disturbed. This explanation and rejection the Synod declares to be derived from God's Word and in agreement with the confessions of the Reformed churches. Hence it clearly appears that those of whom one could hardly expect it have shown no truth, equity, and charity at all in wishing to make the public believe:

**-- that the teaching of the Reformed churches on predestination and on the points associated with it by its very nature and tendency draws the minds of people away from all godliness and religion, is an opiate of the flesh and the devil, and is a stronghold of Satan where he lies in wait for all people, wounds most of them, and fatally pierces many of them with the arrows of both despair and self-assurance;**

**-- that this teaching makes God the author of sin, unjust, a tyrant, and a hypocrite; and is nothing but a refurbished Stoicism, Manicheism, Libertinism, and Mohammedanism;**

**-- that this teaching makes people carnally self-assured, since it persuades them that nothing endangers the salvation of the chosen, no matter how they live, so that they may commit the most outrageous crimes with self-assurance; and that on the other hand**

**nothing is of use to the reprobate for salvation even if they have truly performed all the works of the saints;**

**-- that this teaching means that God predestined and created, by the bare and unqualified choice of his will, without the least regard or consideration of any sin, the greatest part of the world to eternal condemnation; that in the same manner in which election is the source and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and ungodliness; that many infant children of believers are snatched in their innocence from their mothers' breasts and cruelly cast into hell so that neither the blood of Christ nor their baptism nor the prayers of the church at their baptism can be of any use to them; and very many other slanderous accusations of this kind which the Reformed churches not only disavow but even denounce with their whole heart.**

Therefore this Synod of Dordt in the name of the Lord pleads with all who devoutly call on the name of our Savior Jesus Christ to form their judgment about the faith of the Reformed churches, not on the basis of false accusations gathered from here or there, or even on the basis of the personal statements of a number of ancient and modern authorities -- statements which are also often either quoted out of context or misquoted and twisted to convey a different meaning -- but on the basis of the churches' own official confessions and of the present explanation of the orthodox teaching which has been endorsed by the unanimous consent of the members of the whole Synod, one and all.

Moreover, the Synod earnestly warns the false accusers themselves to consider how heavy a judgment of God awaits those who give false testimony against so many churches and their confessions, trouble the consciences of the weak, and seek to prejudice the minds of many against the fellowship of true believers.

Finally, this Synod urges all fellow ministers in the gospel of Christ to deal with this teaching in a godly and reverent manner, in the academic institutions as well as in the churches; to do so, both in their speaking and writing, with a view to the glory of God's name, holiness of life, and the comfort of anxious souls; to think and also speak with Scripture according to the analogy of faith; and, finally, to refrain from all those ways of speaking which go beyond the bounds set for us by the genuine sense of the Holy Scriptures and which could give impertinent sophists a just occasion to scoff at the teaching of the Reformed churches or even to bring false accusations against it.

May Jesus Christ, who sits at the right hand of God and gives gifts to men, sanctify us in the truth. May He silence those who lay false accusations against sound teaching, and equip faithful ministers of his Word with a spirit of wisdom and discretion to the glory of God and the building up of their saints. Amen.

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